

# BREAKTHROUGH

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**Front cover:**

Untitled work by Francesca Schifrin. Ms. Schifrin has been traveling throughout Haiti and painting images reflecting the social and political situation there since 1987. Her recent work deals with the effects of war on the people of Sarajevo. In 1991, she was awarded the J. Paul Getty Trust Fund Fellowship for the Visual Arts. Her work is represented by Galerie LaKaye in Los Angeles and Trojanowska Gallery in San Francisco.

**Back cover:**

"Goodbye Blue Sky, Goodbye."  
Lithograph by Valerie Jacobs, ©1994. Formerly from Chicago, the artist is now living in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is also a fine printer of words and images at Helios Press, 1411 Oakdale Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94124.

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# Defend Democracy in Cuba, Restore Democracy to Haiti

**T**HIS ISSUE OF BREAKTHROUGH FOCUSES ON international affairs—with some rare exceptions, not a big upper. Clearly, we're not living in one of earth's greatest periods.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the containment of many national liberation movements, and the obscene rush by transnational capital to impose its predatory "new order" across the planet has had a profound and disorienting impact. Wars based on right-wing nationalism are proliferating. Whether in Bosnia, Algeria, or Rwanda, the carnage is increasing with no real response from the international community. At least 37 wars exist world-wide. The number is only sure to increase as nations and power groups try to gain control over diminishing resources. Terms like "ethnic cleansing" will become more commonplace as will the pictures of slaughter and death that grace our newspapers, magazines, and television every day.

What wishful hopes were held that Bush's electoral defeat might produce a more humane regime in Washington and a "peace dividend" are collaps-

ing in record time. As state and business elites attempt to market sleek visions of a hi-tech "new world order" dependent on U.S. power, the inescapable truth is that polarization and misery are multiplying on the ground. Whether you're unemployed in Mexico City, Kinshasa, or New York City, restructuring of the global market is a very violent, ugly process.

As economic contention between the capitalist centers of Europe, Japan, and the U.S. accelerates, the logic of competition is driving all these societies to the right. In contrast to a mass culture extolling democracy, it is stratification, racism, the discarding of excess workers, immigrant-bashing, and attacks on women that are the true marching orders of the day. Despite obvious differences in the make-up of European countries and the U.S., what is most striking is the similarity of their official outlooks on race, immigration, and the rise of far-right movements. It is no longer rhetorical to say that fascism is on the rise. Not only are conditions within these nations deteriorating, but the fierce struggle over global zones of

## IN MEMORIAM

*This issue of Breakthrough is dedicated to Irvin Flores Rodríguez, Oscar Collazo, Marlon Riggs, and Tede Matthews.*

*As part of the 1950 uprising against U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico and in protest of the U.S. bombing of Puerto Rico, Oscar Collazo (1914–1994) and Griselio Torresola attacked Blair House, the temporary residence of President Truman. Torresola was killed in the attack. Irvin Flores (1924–1994), along with Lolita Lebron, Andrés Figueroa Cordera, and Rafael Cancel Miranda, shot into the U.S. Congress on March 1, 1954, to focus world attention on the imposition of Commonwealth status on Puerto Rico and to protest continuing U.S. repression of the Puerto Rican independence struggle. The Five Nationalists served as Prisoners of War, refusing to abandon their principles of independence for their nation, and were released unconditionally in 1979, having served over two decades in prison. When they returned home to Puerto Rico, the Nationalists were greeted as national heroes.*

*On April 5, 1994, Marlon Riggs died of AIDS in his home in Oakland, CA. His examination of Black gay men's identity, Tongues Untied, became a lightning rod for Jesse Helms and Christian Right attempts to defund the NEA and public television. When he died, Marlon was working on a documentary examination of Black identity, Black is.... Black Ain't, which will be released later this year.*

*Tede Matthews—organizer, poet, queen of dish, and friend—died of AIDS on July 17, 1993. Tede's work helped bring diverse people and movements together, particularly from the Latino and gay communities. He spearheaded many campaigns to support lesbian and gay activists in Nicaragua, Mexico, and other Latin American countries. We will miss his energy and spirit.*

influence means that the gulf between conditions of daily life in the privileged North and the exploited South is only going to get worse. Is it any wonder that people are depressed when capitalism seems ever triumphant?

But this is also an historic moment when the clash of old and new can produce political realities that were unthinkable a short time ago. An ANC-led government signalling the end of white political domination in South Africa is not only possible but expected. And who on the U.S. left could have predicted that on the very day that NAFTA was to go into effect, a Mayan uprising led by the Zapatista National Liberation Army would set off a chain reaction shattering the fantasy of "the new Mexico"? Or that the militant mass protests of French students could force the conservative government to retreat from its law legalizing the payment of sub-minimum wages to new workers? Or that almost one year after liberation from Ethiopia, the government in Eritrea is still strong and resisting a capitalist takeover. It is these examples of hope and determination that we must look to at this moment as we analyze the Clinton foreign policy.

Even in the post-cold war period Clinton is proving himself to be as much the Warrior as his predecessors. No big surprise that Richard Nixon, of all people, became one of Clinton's mentors!

**N**OWHERE DO THE BANKRUPTCY AND DECEIT OF the current administration become more apparent than in its stance toward Haiti and Cuba. During his presidential campaign Clinton repeatedly stated his disagreement with the Bush administration's policy of turning back Haitian refugees. He vowed to change this policy and restore democracy in Haiti.

Clinton has broken every promise. Haitians fleeing the "killing fields" in their country are turned back by the Coast Guard and routinely interrogated, beaten, imprisoned, and disappeared by Haitian police and military. The current embargo is a joke, allowing oil, weapons, and other necessities to pour in through the Dominican Republic. For the last year the State Department and CIA have repeatedly "leaked" disinformation to undermine President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. During negotiations leading up to the Governor's Island Accord and since, the Clinton administration has demanded that Aristide compromise with the coup leaders. Obviously, the U.S. is more worried about a progressive and democratic government led by Aristide than it is about a continuation of the military reign of terror in Haiti.

The deteriorating situation in Haiti makes it imperative that Aristide and democracy be restored. The military is still firmly in control, grown rich from a \$1.2 billion-a-year cocaine trade. Bodies are

routinely dumped on the streets. Women are systematically raped to terrorize the population.

After a long period of compromise and fruitless negotiations, it appears that President Aristide has had enough. Appearing in San Francisco in mid-April, he denounced the U.S. refugee policy as racist and called for concerted action to end the slaughter in Haiti. "Every day people are murdered, and pigs are eating their corpses," he proclaimed. "How many murders does it take to create a holocaust?"

As opposition rises to Clinton's Haiti policy, a window of opportunity has opened. Activists need to join together in sustained campaigns of action, education, and civil disobedience. The refugee policy must be reversed, the embargo strengthened, and President Aristide returned to Haiti.

**I**RONICALLY, OR PERHAPS TYPICALLY, AS THE Coast Guard turns back Haitian refugees, the U.S. continues to welcome Cuban refugees with open arms. A mass propaganda campaign continues to foretell Cuba's collapse and Castro's demise. The embargo, strengthened by the Clinton-supported Toricelli bill and rendered more deadly by the collapse of the Socialist Bloc, has left the Cuban economy reeling. In three years it has dropped from a ranking of 5 to number 25 on the scale of economic development within Latin America. Rationing is needed for basic foodstuffs and gasoline. A black market has begun to flourish. Under these conditions, many governments would tighten up. But the "Cuban experiment" continues. Mass debates are taking place on subjects ranging from the relationship of the Communist party to democracy, to the role of women, and a reevaluation of its AIDS policy. Child care, health care and education are still considered rights not privileges for all Cubans—an interesting fact when people examine the education and health policies of the U.S.

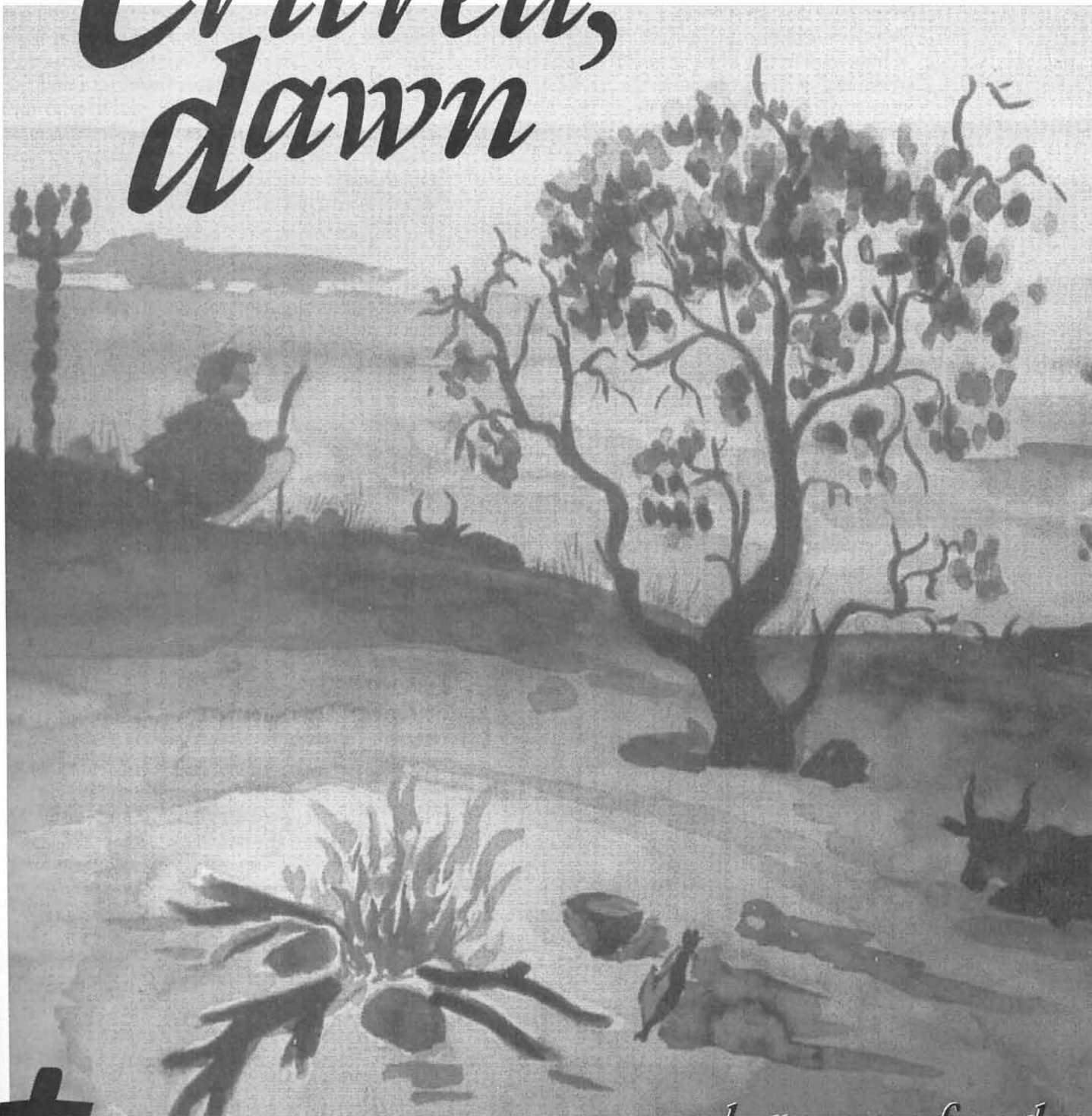
People like to compare Cuba with the U.S. or Europe and then point out its failings. But the comparison is wrong. The reality is that if it weren't for Cuban socialism, the people of Cuba would more likely be living under Haiti-like conditions. Cuba has many weaknesses and they have to be discussed openly. But its example as a country trying to build socialism cannot be underestimated. We have to see that Cuba not only survives but prospers.

Travel challenges are sending hundreds of people to Cuba in defiance of the ban that prohibits travel there by U.S. citizens. Friendship caravan caravans are driving needed supplies over the border to Mexico and on to Cuba. Hundreds of delegations are going to Cuba every year. The embargo must be lifted.

Democracy must be restored to Haiti and defended in Cuba. □



# Eritrea, dawn



*by les Gottesman & frank duhl*

**T**HE SHEH'S CALL PIERCED THE BARELY PINK-RIMMED sky. For the past many weeks in Asmara, the five a.m. call to prayer had sent our heads burrowing into the pillows, but this time we tumbled out of bed. It was the first day of voting in Eritrea's referendum on independence. Crowds would already be lining the streets around the polling places. Voting would begin in two hours.

A million and a half Eritrean voters would tear their ballots in half, separating the blue side (yes) from the red side (no) and dropping one or the other into the ballot box. Eritreans had waited two years—or fifteen—or forty—or one hundred years (see *History of a Disappeared Country*, page 6) for this day, which could have come at any of those times: the 1880s when the Italians seized the Red Sea coast and some villages resisted—



photo: Les Gottesman

or 1950, with Italy defeated, when the UN endorsed the swallow-up of Eritrea by Haile Selassie's imperial Ethiopian state—or 1977 when two liberation fronts, the EPLF and the ELF, were poised for a conclusive military victory. Or independence could have been declared in May 1991, when the EPLF swept into Asmara and the panicking remnants of 150,000 Ethiopian troops, their officers taking off in tanks and jeeps, fled inland toward the Ethiopian and Sudanese borders, just as Ethiopia's Soviet-backed Mengistu tyranny collapsed.

Now, on April 23, 1993, two years later, Eritreans were going to vote for—the outcome was certain—independence. Elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, nothing was certain. Somalia, and especially Mogadishu, had devolved into armed compounds, the streets patrolled by beleaguered U.S. and UN troops. In Ethiopia, Oromos and Amharas still contested the legitimacy of the new government in Addis Ababa. Civil war seethed in Sudan. But in Asmara, Eritrea's capital, civilians had no weapons and fighters displayed none. Enthusiasm for the referendum cut across religious and ethnic lines and political allegiances. ELF leaders, their organization long inactive, had flown into Asmara, stating support for the vote and respect for their rival's, the EPLF's, Provisional Government.

#### IN AND OUT OF THE POLLS

Outside, even in the back streets, there was a rush of excitement. White-swathed women and men (many men, on this day, had eschewed their western suits or work clothes for crisp white tunics and head wrappings) walked purposefully to the schools and offices designated as polling places to find, as we did, lines stretched around the corners. Women and men glowed with happiness. Some had begun to line up at 4:00 a.m. Dignitar-



ies—government officials, leading clergy—were scheduled to vote first, with cameras clicking, when the polls opened at 7:00. We were told, though, of one old woman who had spent the night camped outside the school, determined to cast the first blue ballot. The Muslim cleric deferred the honor.

Eritreans were clearly making a statement to the world. Walking into polling places with just snapshot cameras and no press or observer ID, we were welcomed into the courtyards, the registration areas, the balloting rooms. We went anywhere but into the white-curtained booths where the voters tore their secret ballots into two pieces. But voters had no secret to keep. They held up their blue ballots to the cameras, prayed over them or over the ballot box, and raised their fists. Some shouted “Awet Ne Hafash” (Victory to the Masses, an EPLF slogan) as they dropped the blue slip in the box. Everyone knew, when the boxes were dumped, blue ballots would overwhelm red ones. Everyone also knew an epoch of struggle was over and a new epoch had begun. For months, “After the referendum...” was heard everywhere until it had become the cliché of dreams and projects deferred into the fast-approaching near future when the EPLF, the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front, icons of competence, would have to lead a wrecked, starved country as well as they led the war for it.

Outside a kindergarten, women fill the street, four and six abreast, drumming, chanting, strutting in a high-stepping, swaying dance, entertaining a block-long line of voters leaning into the shade. A woman offering *umbaba*, popcorn, from a tublike basket works her way along the line and through knots of chatting, fanning bystanders. A video team from Boston aims their equipment at an Eritrean man. “How do you feel today?” Nervous before the camera, he chooses his words carefully. He wants to make his feelings perfectly clear: “This is the most beautiful day for me. It is my birthday.”

Two days before the vote, the party started in Asmara—nonstop street dancing, parades, lights, music piped into the streets, traditional costumes and headdresses, even saber dancing—and women drumming and dancing in circles. Eritreans began celebrating who they were, what they had done, what they were about to do.

For one week Eritreans, rightly, turned the spotlight on themselves. Theirs was, journalist Dan Connell points out, maybe the last anticolonial revolution of the twentieth century, arguably the longest armed one. And the Eritreans fought a formidable, giant nation, Ethiopia, armed to the teeth first by the U.S., then by the Soviet Union, again and again by Israel. With enemies like these, Eritrea had no friends, not even (after the Muslim-oriented Eritrean Liberation Front, the ELF, imploded in the early 1980s) Arab states. Arab overtures

found no resonating chord in the EPLF’s secularism and respectful relationships with the half-Christian, half-Muslim Eritrean population. The EPLF knew that religion ran deep in the country’s history and psyche. They knew they had to work with the clerics, for example, in gaining public acceptance for new marriage laws that guaranteed women’s equal rights, and they learned the slow process of discussions needed to make social change stick.

## SELF-RELIANCE

The Eritrean independence struggle became synonymous with “self-reliance”—a 30-year war fought from wholly within the country by a politically mobilized population supporting a large, well-trained army using captured weapons. The historical and political necessity of Eritrean self-reliance forced Eritreans to plan and test—while fighting for—the kind of society they wanted. Roy Pateman, a longtime Eritrea watcher, pointed out in 1990 that one of the reasons for “predicting the ultimate success” of the EPLF lay in the close relationship between Eritrean peasants and the movement. “Peasants,” says Pateman, “have been as important as technology in transforming societies.” However, “peasants are most likely to revolt if faced with a new or sudden imposition which breaks with accepted rules and custom.” One such imposition by the Ethiopian regime—collective farming—swung peasant support decisively to the EPLF in the 1970s. Since then, the EPLF has managed to introduce many reforms, including land redistribution that radically broke with tradition by guaranteeing women’s ownership and inheritance. “Peasant acceptance of the EPLF’s land reform policy,” Pateman concludes, was “a major reason for the EPLF’s continued ability to mobilize popular support.”

The EPLF won popular support by working slowly and patiently. The EPLF shunned imposition, suddenness, and even, if possible, newness. Self-reliance has meant Eritreans relying on Eritreans in the country and around the world. The EPLF are not isolationists, but forced isolation has perhaps provided them an auspicious apprenticeship to leading the nation. The EPLF is known for its can-do attitude, whether on the battlefield or in recycling the junk of war into farfetched but usable stuff—operating rooms made from shipping containers and oxygen tanks made from spent artillery shells. We met an artist who made chess pieces from discarded hypodermic plungers!

But can the EPLF make the transition to leadership of the country and modest attention in the world, while contending with the economic and political pressures of a very hopeful people in a

*Title artwork (page 3): watercolor by Zecarias Tedros, an EPLF fighter, artist, and art teacher.*

devastated country?

The EPLF knows it must pin some plans on international aid. Meanwhile, the United States—which would like to turn its fractured and unpopular “peacekeeping” mission in Somalia over to Ethiopian and Eritrean diplomats and troops—wants to buy Eritrea’s friendship cheap. Eritrea needs billions to feed and rebuild the country. The U.S. has so far provided \$3 million, the kind of small change calculated to keep a beggar begging. But begging is not quite the Eritrean diplomatic style. “We had a big fight with the Americans,” Saleh Meky, secretary for marine resources told us, “over sectors of the economy the EPLF has no intention of privatizing, with the result that the U.S. scaled down its original offer of \$26 million.”

Talking to Saleh and to other government officials, visiting crowded and crumbling schools, and traveling the pocked roads—past burnt-out hulks of treadless tanks and tireless trucks, into dry, almost lunar landscapes—we hoped the aid would be forthcoming. On the roads we passed peasant after peasant walking miles to gather a load of skinny sticks to carry home to cook the evening meal.

Is there a meal to cook? We saw no swollen bellies, no clamorous crowds at the warehouse-size food distribution tents along the roads. The cattle were

fleshy and the goats frisky. Most people eat, but not enough, a Canadian nutritionist who’d surveyed 30 villages told us. Slowly, Eritreans are starving to death. Meanwhile, the West’s attention has shifted to places where hunger and dying are more visible. Eritrean officials freely admit that 75 percent of the population survives on food aid; they’re concerned that it’s drying up. International promises, including the UN’s, they will tell you, have not been met.

The mood in Asmara is deceptive, too. At twilight, the bars and restaurants are full. Sharply dressed teenagers congregate for Cokes and Eritrean-style hamburgers, crunchy with raw peppers. Cars, for the few that have them, jockey for curb space at the cappuccino shops with car service—the traditional teashop transformed by big-city taste and Italian technology. Young men stroll the boulevard, holding hands or in groups, peering in brightly lit windows at narrow fridges, wide TVs, and Euro-style boom boxes.

Can anyone, we wonder, afford these things? Despite the fashion jeans the young wear, mostly brought by relatives from Europe or the States—we carried several bundles from Eritreans in California, as well as pots and pans, toys, wristwatches, and books—people are poor. Simply, there are no jobs, and the government is hard-pressed to create them.

## History of a Disappeared Country



Italy ruled Eritrea from the 1880s until the British marched in in 1941. For the Italians, Eritreans built industrial plants, roads, and a railway.

After World War II Eritrea’s fate was turned over to the UN. In 1950, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles told the Security Council, “From the point of view of justice the opinions of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interests of the U.S. in the Red Sea basin, and considerations of security and world peace make it necessary that this country has to be linked to our ally, Ethiopia.” The UN obediently federated Eritrea to Ethiopia.

Haile Selassie, Ethiopia’s feudal emperor, moved quickly—banning the Eritrean flag and languages, finally abolishing the Eritrean assembly—and then began packing up Asmara’s factories, machine by machine, and trucking them off to Addis Ababa. Ethiopians fared little better: when famine struck Ethiopia in 1972, the emperor hushed it up lest the image of rope-thin babies tarnish his world-wide reputation as a fatherly ruler. Three hundred thousand died.

In 1961, the nationalist Eritrean Liberation Front



Meanwhile, 500,000 Eritrean refugees languish in Sudan. Meanwhile, 100,000 fighters wait to become civilians. But demobilized fighters, the country's heroes, undoubtedly face joblessness.

### WOMEN IN AND OUT OF WAR

The economy is only one area where the EPLF's ideals are threatened by hard reality. The EPLF has long championed women's rights and women's equal participation in every aspect of the liberation struggle, politics, and social life. "There were real changes," Leteyesus Negassi told us. Now head of the Project Department of the National Union of Eritrean Women (called Hamadaye), Leteyesus joined the EPLF in 1974.

"When we joined, we began changing mentally, because the Front was teaching us that we could fight as men could, and we could work at whatever work there is—to fight, to be doctors, to be teachers. At the beginning it was very difficult for us to accept. Is it true, we wondered? Can we really fight? But we could fight." In the war zones, men and women fought and died side by side. In the base areas and liberated territory, they shared the daily tasks of survival and production, of feeding, educating, and providing health care for themselves and the civilian population. "The fighter women created a very new

identity for Eritrea," Hamadaye researcher Elsa Gebreyesus told us, "that has changed a lot of perceptions of women."

"The life of the women in the Front," Leteyesus continued, "started to have an impact on the peasants and nomads. Slowly change came." Women not only began to participate in electing the village committees, Senait Lijam, Hamadaye's educational coordinator, explained, "they themselves were elected. Traditionally, a village committee was made up of men only. If a woman happened just to walk by, she was forbidden to pass when the assembly was sitting. But now it has completely changed. Women are village leaders. They are decision-makers of the village."

Now, with the ex-fighters, men and women, in private life, is the resolve for women's equality fragmenting? Being back with their families is, for women, a strong—though perhaps not permanent—pull toward their traditional, care-giving roles. "In the field," author and human rights activist Abeba Tesfagiorgis told us, "the very situation did not allow them to think about their family members." Meanwhile, their families suffered, whether under Ethiopian occupation, or of famine, or in forced relocation. "Now," said Abeba, "they're thinking, 'My father—what can I do for him? Where is my

took up arms. Ten years later, the secular, revolutionary Eritrean People's Liberation Front, the EPLF, was formed. By 1974, when the emperor was overthrown by the Ethiopian popular movement, the fronts had liberated most of Eritrea. But dictator Haile Mengistu Mariam (his requests rebuffed by the U.S.) turned to the Soviet Union for a massive infusion of arms. The Soviets were delighted to have Ethiopia—big, populous, a symbol of African independence—as its client.

For the next 15 years, the EPLF faced Russian MiGs and T-54 tanks, yet year after year defeated massive Ethiopian offensives, captured dozens of tanks, hundreds of trucks, and village by village took over military control and civil administration of the country.

In 1989, the EPLF captured the port city of Massawa, cutting Ethiopian-occupied Asmara, Eritrea's capital, off from supplies. During the 1980s the EPLF had built strategic alliances with the Oromo and Tigrayan rebels fighting inside Ethiopia to topple Mengistu. In May 1991, the EPLF fighters entered Asmara unopposed, as leaderless Ethiopian troops fled. A few days later, Addis Ababa fell to the Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Revolutionary Front.



Ethiopian aerial bombing destroyed much of Massawa, Eritrea's largest port. This was Haile Selassie's Red Sea palace.

photo: Les Gotteman

aunt? What can I do for her?" The desire to help grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and younger generations pulls women fighters away from the collectivity, the discussions, and the activism of large numbers of women fighting and camping together. New, undreamed-of issues arise. The feelings women have about their war-torn bodies, families, and lives are beginning to be discussed openly. More than one Eritrean woman talked about the aged and worn physical condition that women combatants noticed about themselves now that they were mingled with women who had endured the war in the relatively privileged Ethiopian-held towns—especially Asmara, run-down and neglected but untouched by fighting. In the cities, ex-fighters compete for jobs with their well-dressed and better-fed sisters.

Hamadaye, the country's sole women's group, is practical in its approach. "Women must be self-sufficient economically; politically they must be organized, as partners of men; and in their health situation, the community must be responsible to change the life of women because women are exposed to all the dangers of pregnancy and giving birth," said Leteyesus. Along with literacy classes and advanced job training for women fighters, Hamadaye aims to provide small business loans—and these businesses, a roadside teashop or a tailorshop, are *small*—for the huge number of women who head households, a result of the war's devastation of Eritrea's families.

The government insists on women's representation, using a formula to ensure that a minimum number of elected seats in each village, district, and province, and in the National Assembly, Eritrea's legislature, go to women—perhaps the first country in the world to do so. The EPLF's Third Congress in February 1994, elected 12 women (of 75 members) to the Front's Central Council and 3 (of 12) to the Executive Council.

Is there a backlash against women's gains, we asked? Well, yes, women agreed, in predictable areas from housework division to old men's complaints about women's participation in village politics. "We expected it," said Senait. "We have, for example, opened an adult education center in Gash and Barka where most of the people are Muslims. The husbands say, 'Hey, my woman should veil her face, and she's not going to go out of the house.' We are not going to tell them to go against their religion. We don't care what religion they profess. But it is a must that a woman should liberate herself from illiteracy. We insisted, and finally they accepted it."

We were more troubled, perhaps, by the images of women projected in an, admittedly, image-poor society—advertising media haven't arrived yet. But there are posters, cultural troupes, live theater, local and Ethiopian pop music, and clothes, not to mention the churches' rules and rituals, which often cast

women in secondary, limited, or subservient roles—with no competing images of women's strength or assertiveness in peace or in war.

### LIBERATION? YES. REVOLUTION?

The EPLF are liberators who fought so long they became a kind of subculture in Eritrean society. Two generations have been at war. Fighters grew up in the field. Granted, they are a very influential subculture, and now in fact a popular government, based on their ability to serve people's needs in the midst of war's devastation. Now, in peacetime, Eritreans are waiting to find out what the EPLF can do. Slogans matter less. In the West, however, when the EPLF is mentioned—from Washington to Berkeley—the question arises: what does the EPLF stand for?

In the 1970s, the EPLF proposed "revolutionary armed struggle for national liberation." Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung were standard EPLF reading. EPLF slogans were anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist.

Now the armed struggle has succeeded and "revolution" has been succeeded by policies for "creating a situation conducive to equal opportunity and competition" by "encouraging the internal and external private sectors" within a "focus on long-term, secure, balanced development." Relations with Israel are friendly.

Yet, as Dan Connell points out in his recent book on Eritrea, *Against All Odds*, "despite the efforts of many Eritreans to downplay the past influence of Marxism...left concepts and analytical methods had a strong influence on many of the movement's leaders in the early years, and they were thoroughly infused into the political education taught to fighters and civilian supporters throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Though many of these ideas were either rejected or stripped of their doctrinaire quality, the radical egalitarian values they reflected remain a force within what has always been an essentially indigenous Eritrean political movement."

Saleh Meky is the secretary of marine resources, a cabinet-level member of the government, and one of those radical egalitarians. How, we asked him, does the government reconcile revolutionary ideals with the current emphasis on privatizing the economy? In a lengthy interview, he ran through the questions progressive Eritreans ask themselves.

"Certainly, Ethiopia gave socialism a bad name," Saleh said. "The mentality, for example, was to build this huge navy and huge, *awful* ships that needed five million dollars a day just to move from one spot to another—to show the world that they have a big navy, and they are a huge socialist country. It was all nonsense. When half of your people are starving to death, you have no business having huge navy ships move around. But anyway—conversely, of course, there was nothing done to develop marine resources."

Ethiopia's socialism never took people's lives and



needs into account, in Eritrea or in Ethiopia. The top-down “founding” of Ethiopia’s worker’s party, the thoughtless collectivization policies in agriculture, the substitution of political fealty to Mengistu for a development strategy, left Ethiopia divided and poor. Then there was the state bureaucracy’s corruption, no less endemic to the Mengistu regime than it had been to the court of Haile Selassie.

“Does that mean socialism is bad? Of course not,” says Saleh. “It stood on the side of the working class and the other weak elements in society to have their rights protected. There is no ideological problem, then, for us Eritreans. The majority of Eritreans who suffered are peasants, workers, minorities, and women. These people have paid a price, literally, with their kids and their homes and their property. But what do you do? You have a devastated economy, an infrastructure that has totally collapsed, and no capital as a state. Where does the capital come from? Is there any great socialist country out there that’s going to give us one penny? No. Neither do I see Americans coming and giving us a penny. We don’t see anyone out there who is going to give us ten cents or ten dollars to buy spare parts for a beer company so people could work there.

“Take my field, fishing. I have to get this fisherman a boat. To get this fisherman a boat, in practical terms, I have to invite somebody in Saudi Arabia, in Egypt, in Italy, in California to come. I have to say, ‘Listen, if you buy this fisherman a boat, he will bring in the product, you will get something, and he will get something, and I assure you of your investment.’ That’s what we are talking about. We’re not talking about GMs and IBMs.”

Saleh’s voice rises with the irony of his—and the government’s—situation. In one sense, little has changed, and self-reliance continues to be the mainstay of the EPLF’s practice. High stakes ride on these small-capital endeavors. The three million Eritreans in the country, and half a million at its doorstep, will live or die, thrive or languish, on the success of such fishing and farming and small manufacturing projects.

But we saw, as historian and political analyst Roy

Pateman had concluded in 1990, that “the Eritrean revolution has already transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.” The transformation has meant the involvement of suppressed populations—peasants, nomads, women—in the decisions that shape their lives. The referendum involved every Eritrean (voting was worldwide) in the process which the EPLF began 20 years ago in the midst of war: women, minorities, and the lower classes have been systematically, determinedly brought into the public sphere in the villages, in the military, in the



photo: Les Gottenman

health and education systems, in government policy-making, in workshops, factories, and small businesses. At the lowest level, the remotest locations, among the smallest ethnic groups, humble, thoughtful, but absolutely dogged EPLF cadres have listened to and learned from their fellow Eritreans. The EPLF supported the people, rather than expecting the people to support them as their liberators.

Right now, the government has begun to work on

see ERITREA, page 59

original photo: Pam Hasegawa/Impact Visuals

Olongapo bar, Philippines  
Dancers are available as "dates for male patrons."



# THE GLOBAL TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN

## Red Light, Green Light

by Judith Mirkinson

**E**NTERTAINMENT GIRLS, HOSPITALITY GIRLS, massage girls, prostitutes, it all means the same thing. They're part of the globalization of the world's economy. Goods to be shipped across borders, sometimes overland, sometimes by sea, from one airport to another. Commodities in a multibillion dollar industry. But this time the products are women and children being sold for profit. We're talking here about international sex trafficking.

There are several categories of trafficking. The first and largest (which this article will concentrate on) is that of the transnational sex industry: international prostitution. There is also the mail-order bride industry. The other main category is that of exporting workers in exchange for foreign capital to be sent back home. In the case of women, these are usually domestic workers or nurses. The women all perform services that are deemed necessary and vital to the host countries, yet they live in the margins, more often than not, invisible.

The traffick is that of poor women to richer men. The flow of poor women from the South to North is the largest, although now there is also an increase of women from the former Eastern bloc. The most frequent destinations for the women are Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, and the Middle East.

The women come from rural areas and city slums. They are either recruited as tourist workers or are often kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery. Others are simply sold outright. In some countries there are actual markets where women are sold in the streets. Actually to call most of them women is a misnomer, for often they are young girls, ages 10–15. Some have not even reached the age of menstruation, many have no idea what sex is.

Imagine you're a young girl brought from Burma to Thailand, you have been kidnapped or bought. You're terrified. You have no idea where you are, what country you're in, what's going to happen to you. If you haven't been raped along the way (or sometimes even if you have) you're immediately brought to the "Room of the Unveiling of the Virgin." There you are raped continuously—until you can no longer pass for a virgin. Then you are put to work.

These girls are bought for \$400–\$800. They're told they will have to earn this money back before they can leave the brothel. They're charged for all their clothes, food, and board and usually receive only 20 percent of the money they earn. In reality they often earn back four to five times what they owe before the managers tell them they're on their own. Once that happens the women are often no better off than before. They have no livelihood other than sex work, they have no home, and they've been stigmatized for life.

It's not that any of this is exactly new. Women have been bought and sold for thousands of years. We're all only too familiar with the "world's oldest profession." Mail-order brides have also been commonplace—did you see *The Piano*? But the selling has become more organized and systematized. It's the scope, money, and reasons involved that make this business one that has reached catastrophic proportions.

The numbers are staggering. Here are just a few of the statistics. It's estimated that from one to two million women and children are trafficked each year. During a 1991 conference of Southeast Asian women's organizations, it was estimated that 30 million women have been sold worldwide since the

mid-70s. Over 100,000 women are shipped each year to Japan to serve in indentured servitude in bars and brothels. Thousands of young women and girls are sent from Nepal to India and from Burma to Thailand. In the past year 200,000 women have been sent from Bangladesh to Pakistan. Young women have been found in China on their way to the brothels of Bangkok. Women from Latin America and Africa are turning up in Thailand and Europe, just as those from Latin America and the Caribbean are shipped to the U.S., although a real study of the traffick into the U.S. and Canada hasn't been done. These numbers mostly exclude the issue of internal trafficking for "domestic consumption."

How did these numbers come about?

During the 60s and 70s tourism became one of the big industries for developing nations. Promoted by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and agencies like USAID, countries were urged to exploit their natural resources by developing resorts and hotels to attract foreign capital. Part and parcel of the tourist attraction was sex. Package tours were developed to include airfare, accommodations, cars, and women or men for sexual pleasure. In Thailand, for instance, travel brochures promote "sun, sea, and sex." They build on the patriarchal and racist fantasies of European, Japanese, American, and Australian men by touting the exotic, erotic subservience of Asian women.

They [sex tours] offer meetings with the most beautiful and young Eastern creatures (age 16 to 24 years) in a soft and sexy surrounding and in the seductive and tropic night of the exotic paradise.... You get the feeling that taking a girl here is as easy as buying a pack of cigarettes.... Many of the girls in the sex world come from the poor northeastern region of the country or the slums of Bangkok. It has become more a habit that one of the nice looking daughters goes into the business. They have to earn money for the poor family.... With this little slave you can do practically everything in the field of sex the whole night and you will not be disappointed with the girl. She gives real Thai warmth....

—Excerpts from a Dutch tourist pamphlet on sex tours in Thailand

The war in Vietnam brought a military buildup in Asia that ironically proved fortuitous to many countries' economies. Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and Okinawa built up a burgeoning sex industry outside the bases. Rest and recreation ("R & R") actually created new cities and added much-needed capital to the overall economy of each nation. It is estimated that by the mid-80s the sex industries around the bases in the Philippines had generated more than \$500 million. At the end of the war in Vietnam, Saigon had 500,000 prostituted

women—this is equal to the total population of Saigon before the war.

Many of these countries developed policies and passed legislation to aid the sex business and "support the boys." Thailand, for example, passed the Entertainment Act, which included an incredible policy called "Hired Wife Services." By the mid-70s there were 800,000 prostituted Thai women.

Asian women were (and still are) looked upon as fragile, exotic, sexual flowers, there for men to do with as they wished. Men were convinced that practices that might be frowned upon or illegal in their own countries would be available in places like Bangkok and Manila. This has become true for both heterosexual and homosexual men, for the sale of young boys is also big business.

If you want extremely young girls, or generally speaking, if you want something for which you could get "hanged" in your own country, you can find it in these places without the risk of getting hanged. You can expect a nod of the head, the Asian clasp of the hands, all accompanied by a "thank you."

—German tourist brochure on Thailand, 1983

Tourists arrived by the thousands, bringing in the much-needed yen, marks, and dollars. Almost 75 percent of the five million tourists who come to Thailand each year are males. Some companies go so far as to arrange special tours as incentives and rewards for their employees. Tourism has emerged as the single largest foreign exchange earner in Nepal, Thailand, and the Philippines. Men are guaranteed a good time and, to sweeten the deal, are given the impression that they are actually doing good deeds.

When you screw here, you may not do it for Germany but you certainly do it for the welfare of Kenya.

—German tourist

Tax-free zones, industrial zones, and capital growth centers are also becoming centers for trafficking. One of the lures for businesses and for their employees is the promise of available women. The police and governments are completely complicit in the running of the sex trade. Sexual services are provided on a regular basis to government officials to keep them in line. Government profits are so immense that they are loathe to complain anyway.

It's gotten to the point where entire villages in northern Thailand and southern Burma (see related article, page 25) are being decimated of girl children. In a strange twist parents welcome, for the first time, the birth of a girl child rather than that of a boy, because they know they have a guaranteed wage earner. Most of these families feel they have no other

choice than to give up some of their children.

And the children are being sold at younger and younger ages.

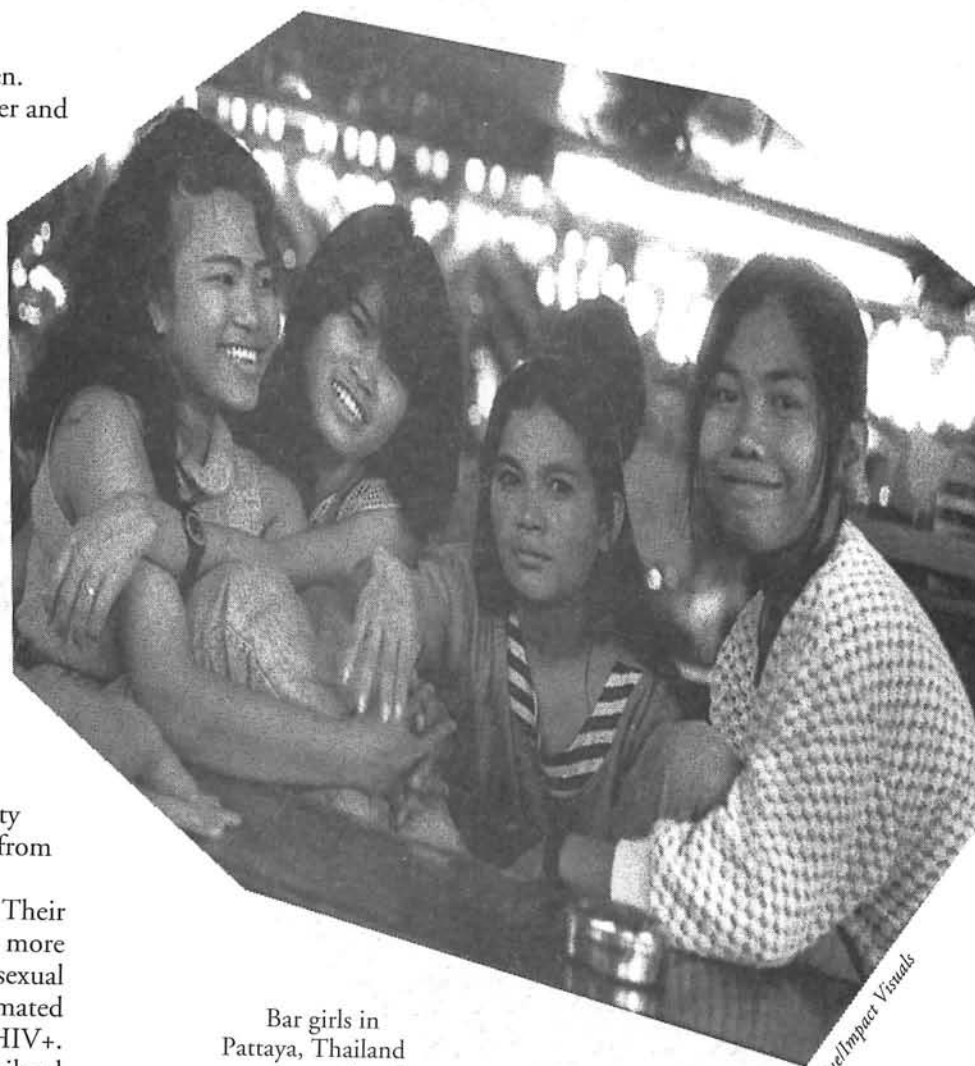
This is fueled both by the thrill of child sex and the fear of AIDS. In many countries there is an age-old notion that virginity can cure venereal disease. This dovetails into the belief that the younger the child, the more likely he or she won't have slept with anyone and therefore won't be infected with AIDS. Thus girls and boys as young as eight years old are now being sought and provided throughout the world for their sexual services. Again, the numbers are horrifying. It is estimated that there are 800,000 child prostitutes in Thailand, 400,000 in India, 250,000 in Brazil, and 60,000 in the Philippines. Twenty thousand young girls and boys are brought from Burma to Thailand each year.

Children are actually more prone to AIDS. Their internal tissues of the vagina and anus are more delicate and tear more easily as a result of sexual intercourse (especially with adults). It is estimated that 20–30 percent of child prostitutes are HIV+. Fifty percent of the under-18 prostitutes in Thailand are thought to have contracted HIV. In 1993 from a rare police raid of a Thai brothel holding young Burmese women, 36 percent tested positive. When you extrapolate these numbers to the entire population, the number of women and men who will have AIDS by the year 2000 is in the millions.

Trafficking is not only happening in the “under-developed nations.” It is now becoming commonplace to see fathers from Eastern Europe bringing their young daughters to Western European cities. Often these children are brutalized by the clients and are forced to seek medical help. As one doctor in the *New York Times* reported:

One father came with his 12-year-old daughter. She was terrorized and in terrible pain. I asked him why he did it. “First of all we are very poor....she is still too young to get pregnant....she is very young...she will forget.”

But she won't forget. The psychological consequences of this mass brutalization of children are only beginning to be understood. As one social worker who works with former child prostitutes in Thailand put it, “They remind me of empty shells—so much missing, no sense of self, no hope, no trust. Only a deep hollow we need to fill.”



Bar girls in  
Pattaya, Thailand  
(1992)

photo: Sean Sprague/Impact Visuals

What is to be done? Clearly the issues involved are both complex and overwhelming for they touch on one of the basic foundations around which society has been organized: the relationship between women and men. The notion of woman as object is not going to go away any time soon. Nor are millions of new jobs that could generate the same kind of money about to miraculously appear.

Then too, there is the moral cloud that envelops the subject. Despite the periodic glamorization of the profession in movies and TV shows, prostitutes continue to be looked down upon as the scum of society, people who somehow deserve their fate. These women are objects of pity and disrespect. Prostitution is illegal in most places and it is the women who are punished and put into danger.

Instead of punishing traffickers, the judge punished us.... They want to prove that we are just prostitutes who have no dignity and that our words are not trustworthy. They believe that prostitutes cannot be victims of the slave trade because we have already sold our bodies.



San Francisco Bay Guardian

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# Mail-Order Brides

"MOBs"—you've probably seen the ads in the newspapers, but you haven't realized what they were. Here are a couple of examples from the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*. These ads aren't just about people finding companions. They represent million-dollar businesses. It's estimated that there are at least 50,000 Filipina mail-order brides in the U.S. alone. The buyers are most often older white men who are looking for women as servants and sex partners. They've bought the message that Filipina women are passive and anxious to please—just the kind of woman they want.

The women are often isolated and scared; many become virtual slaves in their own homes. Sometimes these "marriages" work out. Many times they don't and sometimes there are disastrous consequences. Women have been tortured and killed. Some men use their wives as prostitutes or for pornography. Clearly, not all the husbands are psychotic, but the incidence of violence against mail-order brides is extremely high.

The agencies who recruit and then sell the brides are not sleazy hole-in-the-wall places. They're legitimate businesses. One of the biggest, Cherry Blossom, which has its headquarters in Hawaii, is run by a Princeton University MBA.

One way to stop this business is to get rid of the ads. Last year GABRIELA Network, a U.S. based organization in support of women in the Philippines, got *Harpers* to stop running the ads. Now, women from around the country are beginning to demand that their local papers stop the ads as well. Check your local paper. If they're there, start a campaign to get rid of them!

## DOMESTIC WORKERS

Perhaps you read about it during the Gulf War. Hundreds of Filipinas had barricaded themselves in

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the Spanish Embassy in Kuwait because they were afraid for their lives. Thousands of them had been living in virtual slavery cleaning houses and taking care of the children. When the war started they were raped by soldiers from both the Kuwait and Iraq armies. When told of the incidents the Filipino minister responsible commented, "Why don't they just lie back and enjoy themselves?"

Part of the economic plan developed by the IMF and World Bank for the Philippines (and other countries) during the late 60s and 70s was the idea of labor export. A Philippine Overseas Employment Agency was established. In the 70s this involved mostly men working in construction in the Middle East, but by the late 70s and 80s the majority of Filipinos working outside the country were women.

Here are some estimated figures which (excluding the U.S. and Canada):

- 75,000 prostituted women in Japan
- 50,000 maids in Singapore
- 50,000 domestics/prostituted women in Hong Kong
- 75,000 domestics in England
- 50,000 domestics in Spain
- 75,000 domestics in Italy
- 50,000 in Germany
- 150,000 in the Middle East

In Canada you have to be married or live in the residence of your employer for two years before getting residency. In Kuwait and Saudi Arabia your passport is taken from you the minute you arrive at the airport. In Hong Kong your passport stays with your employer. The same goes for Singapore. Although there are supposed to be laws guaranteeing their well-being, many of the women do not receive their full salaries and are not given adequate housing or health care. Still the monies they send back are enormous: \$2 billion a year—enough to pay the interest on the Philippines's loans.

Although there is much debate within the feminist movement around the question of prostitution one thing should be perfectly clear. Prostitutes are not criminals and they should not be penalized and jailed. Given the nature of trafficking, one cannot look at these jobs as ones of free choice. Many women's organizations are even changing the nomenclature. The term *prostituted* women highlights the aspect of coercion.

Hotlines, drop-in centers, and support programs are being run in countries throughout the world. For instance, in Korea, My Sister's Place offers a refuge for women. In the Philippines and Kenya several drop-in centers exist for prostitutes and entertainment girls. Empowerment for these women is vital. From Nepal to India to Peru to Nigeria, voices that have been silenced are beginning to be heard. They refuse to be victims or to be looked upon as such. Women who have had no alternatives are developing livelihood projects and are seeking skills training. The philosophy of the centers is to be non-judgmental, to give the women a chance to organize and discuss among themselves.

We set no conditions for women to be accepted at the drop-in centers. They don't have to leave the bars and all possibilities are open. What matters is that they feel that they are accepted. Then the process begins so that they accept themselves, and see that they have capabilities for something else. So from personal guilt and hatred of themselves, they come to love themselves.

—Sister Sol Perpinan, Third World Movement  
Against Exploitation of Women

Women in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as in Europe and North America, are discussing the issues of violence against women publicly and demanding that it be stopped. During the Vienna Conference on Human Rights held in June of 1993, women organized a special tribunal to demand that women's basic rights be recognized as human rights. Rape was declared a war crime against women and humanity. Women also demanded an end to the trafficking of women and children.

There is no international instrument in existence which explicitly stipulates that it is a human right to be free of sexual exploitation. Therefore, a new Convention must be promulgated. We introduce the new concept/definition of prostitution which is under the umbrella of sexual exploitation:

Sexual exploitation is a violation of human dignity, therefore:

It is a fundamental human right to be free from sexual exploitation in all of its forms. Sexual exploitation is a practice by which person(s) achieve sexual gratification or financial gain, or advancement

through the abuse of a person's sexuality by abrogating that person's human right to dignity, equality, autonomy, and physical and mental well-being.

—from Conventions presented to the tribunal in Vienna

In March 1994, 800 women from around the world met in New York to discuss preparations for the Fourth UN Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in 1995. As in Nairobi, two conferences will actually take place; the "official" one run by the governments and the more interesting and vital conference run by women's organizations and NGOs. When organizers pored through the official agenda, they found, much to their surprise and rage, that nothing focused on trafficking. As one Filipina organizer put it, "All they're interested in is economic development on a mega level. They don't see that women's very human rights are involved. Trafficking is one of the most dire problems facing women today and it must be addressed and stopped."

In order to make this happen women are circulating petitions internationally demanding the inclusion of trafficking on the official agenda. They hope to get one million signatures by the summer.

It's not just the destruction of women and children's lives that makes this such an important issue; it's also what it does to all the cultures and societies where it takes place.

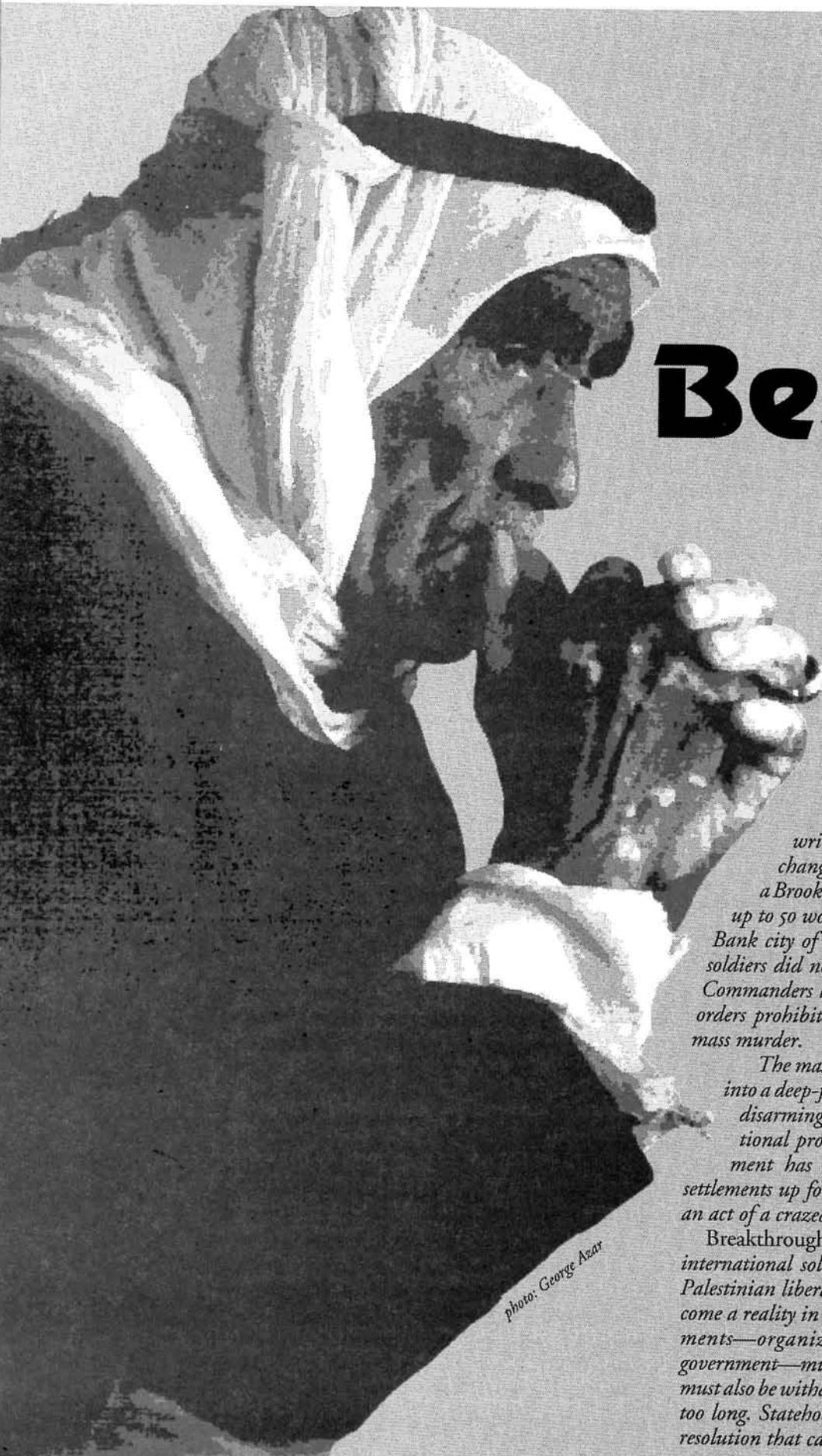
Throughout world history, patriarchy has valued women not as persons but as things, pieces of property to be bought and sold. Although this view was not held in all societies and at all times, it is common enough.

However, it's also true that it has been women who have held communities together. It is through women that cultures are developed and passed down to the next generation.

So what are the implications when societies are literally stripped of so many of their women, when women's lives are reduced even further? (For the first time in 500 years, there are now more men than women in the Philippines.) The very fabric of life begins to disintegrate. After a while it doesn't take much to sell the children as well.

By organizing against sex trafficking, women are confronting the view of themselves as objects and commodities and are saying *Enough!* And in doing so, they're beginning to unravel the historic intersection between capitalism and patriarchy, challenging the entire conception of people as things to be moved around or discarded according to the needs of the marketplace. Sex trafficking exposes so much—the treatment of women, the intersection between racism and sexuality, the disparity between the North and South. That's why it's so important. That's why the trafficking of women and children must be stopped. □





# Besieged

*Ed. note: Since this article was written, the situation in Palestine has changed dramatically. On February 25, a Brooklyn-born Jewish settler shot to death up to 50 worshippers at a mosque in the West Bank city of Hebron. For ten minutes, Israeli soldiers did not intervene to stop the slaughter. Commanders later admitted that their standing orders prohibit shooting at settlers, even to stop mass murder.*

*The massacre threw the peace negotiations into a deep-freeze, as Palestinians called for the disarming of the settlers, and for an international protection force. The Israeli government has refused to put the issue of the settlements up for negotiations, calling the killings an act of a crazed lone gunman.*

*Breakthrough believes that it is time to reassert international solidarity with the demands of the Palestinian liberation movement. For peace to become a reality in Palestine, the illegal Israeli settlements—organized in the first place by the government—must be withdrawn. Israeli troops must also be withdrawn; 27 years of occupation is far too long. Statehood for Palestine remains the only resolution that can promise justice and peace.*

*photo: George Azar*



## Palestine

# Reflections on a Homeland

by Elias A. Rashmawi

ON MY WAY BACK FROM JERUSALEM TO MY HOME in the city of Ramallah, on the evening of September 13, 1993, the day PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the "Declaration of Principles" on the White House lawn, I found myself in the midst of perhaps the most bewildering and stunning experience of recent years. The once-outlawed and dearly-protected Palestinian flag, in a size like I have never seen before and with a silky Madison Avenue shine, was being carried by carefree euphoric youth and flaunted before smiling Israeli soldiers who simply stood watch without their usual deadly barrage of bullets and tear gas. Immediately, something in me trembled with extreme intensity, as that particular shiny flag suddenly seemed fake and unreal.

You see, the flag that I recognize has no shine, and is always wrinkled and torn as a result of being hidden away from these very soldiers and others like them. It is sewn by a mother, or maybe a youngster, using uneven scraps of material found in any typical Palestinian home. It is the type that children died for as they climbed electricity poles despite mortal danger. It is the very flag that draped the coffins of thousands of my people killed for being who they are, Palestinians. It is that ever-beautiful scrap of paper colored by a child and plastered on a school bag for the world to see. That is the flag that I and my entire people know—the flag of the 1936 six-month general strike, of the villagers massacred in 1948 in Deir Yassin, of Sabra and Shatila and Beirut, of Jabalya camp, and of Beir Sahour—the flag of the stubborn and resilient *Intifada*.

But then again, the symbolism embodied in any particular flag is a direct function of the conditions during which it is being displayed, and is integrally related to the national discourse of the moment. A Palestinian flag flying under the protection of the occupying power can't negate that same occupation, while the flag that flies in spite of the occupation truly symbolizes the narrative of proud liberation.

I did not know at the time that this shiny clean flag and thousands of others like it, as well as countless full-color Arafat posters and T-shirts, distributed "free of charge," were financed by Arafat's own political wing to celebrate the "coming of peace." In fact it was later revealed by the Israeli media that much of this paraphernalia was manufactured by a right-wing Israeli company that wanted to capitalize on the moment.

That day, I continued home only to witness more of the same: hundreds of cars and trucks with children packed inside and on the roofs, continuously honking, and enthusiastically cheering Chairman Arafat as the liberator of our besieged land. For a moment, if not for the sobering sight of soldiers toting automatic rifles everywhere, I almost believed that the occupation had just ended, and that our broken families were soon to be reunited. Emotionally charged, and with an uneasy feeling of excitement, I ran for the television set hoping to uncover the reasons for all the festivities. But instead of finding answers to my curious questions, I found disappointment and shame.

When given the chance, as the entire world watched his Washington address, my national leader

spoke nothing of our history, nothing of our bitter struggle for a homeland, and nothing of our displacement and long exile. I watched, waiting for a mention of the endless trail of massacres carried out against our people, for a mention of our right to return, to statehood, and to self-determination. I waited for our collective memory as victims of repeated colonial projects to be told. I waited for our suffering to be recognized without conditions or selectivity. I waited for our heroic story—the Palestinian story—to be narrated by its entrusted leader.

Instead, and much to my indignation, it was Rabin that arrogantly spoke of our experience as he portrayed our entire history and existence as a menace to his own. He perverted truth, and turned reality on its head as he painted the Israeli occupiers as victims of the “heartless” Palestinian people—all of that, while my national leader stood smiling to the cameras. It was then that I covered my face with my hands in shame and anger. For regardless of any political agreements or backdoor diplomacy, our story should have been told without reservation. After all, we are the “victims of the map,” the dispossessed, the landless, and the dwellers of wretched camps. And suddenly, it all made sense. The shiny, clean, and pressed flag—void of any meaning of suffering—that I saw earlier was apparently made to enshrine a false history and an unjust peace.

The lopsided narrative that Rabin presented to the world during the Washington ceremonies is but a rude continuation to that which has been told by other Zionist leaders for many decades. “It was not as though there was a Palestinian People in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian People and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them,” once declared the late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir as she attempted to negate the very existence of the Palestinian people. “They did not exist.”

THE ABSOLUTE CONTEMPT FOR US AS A PEOPLE can best be illustrated by the writings of the founder and architect of modern Zionism, Theodore Herzl. In his landmark essay, “The Jewish State,” Herzl wrote that if Jewish settlers were to “move into a region where there are wild animals to which the Jews are not accustomed—big snakes, etc.—I shall use the natives, prior to giving them employment in transient countries, for the extermination of these animals.” Later on, Israeli leaders took turns in their diatribes and racist remarks, as Palestinians were referred to as “two-legged animals,” “cockroaches” to be crushed, and “flies” to be swatted.

Yet, and much to the disappointment of Arafat’s protégés, the elaborate festivities that swept nearly every town and village came to a sudden and immediate halt only one week after it began. No longer did

you see or hear the louder-than-ever cars and trucks plastered with Arafat’s photo. No longer did youth crowd the streets with their dancing, or fill the air with their singing. It was as if there were some sort of order from the “king” of the land to “his commoners and servants” to celebrate for exactly seven days and nights, for reasons that he alone understood—perhaps because he needed cheerleaders for his performance in the American capital. After all, the real celebration of a victorious liberation movement can’t be anything but spontaneous and total in scope. It could never be limited to the honking of cars, or by the display of brand-new Israeli-made shiny Palestinian flags, or to one single week of festivities by only a segment of the supposedly victorious people.

Gaza and Jericho, we were told by our leadership, would be placed under Palestinian rule as a first step. And soon after, the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip would be transformed into a sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Refugees in exile would be allowed to come home. People were promised economic revitalization and rejuvenation through the billions and billions of dollars that would be poured into the area.

At the time, the leadership pointed to the scheduled redeployment of Israeli army forces on December 13, to the promised release of prisoners and to the future hope of dismantling the settlements, as solid proof of their successes. They asked us not to pay attention to the continuous declarations by Israeli officials that such things were simply not going to happen. Rabin’s denial of Palestinian statehood was simply for Israeli public consumption, so we were told.

Given such promises, and the drastically differing views over the intent of the signed agreement, it was not long before the debate within the Palestinian movement became heated. Those rejecting the accords pointed to a host of problematic issues resulting from the agreement and its false promises, the most paramount of which is the total dismemberment of the Palestinian people, the full negation of their history, and the complete undermining of the national consensus. “Whatever happened to the Palestinian right to return?” they asked as they questioned the transformation of a collective right into an individual privilege subject to the approval of the Israeli government.

They pointed to the fact that there are no guarantees whatsoever that the Israeli army would really withdraw from the area, and cited the language of the agreement as well as that of Israeli officials as proof of their claims. Even traditional critics of the Palestinian resistance movement, and historical supporters of Israel, such as the well-respected journalist and Middle East expert, Thomas Friedman, agree with this view. “Mr. Arafat’s letter to Mr. Rabin is



not simply a statement of recognition. It is a letter of surrender, a typewritten white flag, in which the PLO Chairman renounces every political position on Israel that he held since the PLO's foundation in 1964," Friedman wrote in the *New York Times* four days before the Washington festivities. When the Israeli army sent its undercover units to hunt down and kill pro-Arafat militants right after the PLO Chairman had ordered them to lay down their weapons and surrender to the army, Israel's hidden agenda became even more evident, and claims by Arafat's critics became more convincing.

I attended several of the countless rallies held in nearly every city, town, and camp for and against the signed accords, and engaged people from many walks of life, in an attempt to understand the reasons for the apparent support Arafat was commanding in the streets. It became evident to me that the PLO Chairman had skillfully manipulated the desperate economic situation of the people and transformed it into a winning ticket, or so he hoped. He had capitalized on the patriarchal position he had created for himself as the uncontested national leader, and presented himself as a prophet-like figure with all the answers.

For instance, one afternoon a few days after the accords were signed, I was called by a friend to step out of a Gaza store, where I was engaged in the usual afternoon coffee and heated debate, in order to observe the then-new phenomenon of masked youth strutting the streets with automatic rifles on their shoulders. It was explained to me by many bystanders in a casual yet enthusiastic manner that these were going to be the protectors of the future state and its institutions, the guardians of the coming wealth, and the symbols of Arafat's absolute power. Such was the popular perception in the Gaza Strip: "the Old Man (as Arafat is called) is coming to save the day," much like Gary Cooper in a high-noon shootout. During all pro-agreement rallies, it was not the revolution that was hailed for achieving the perceived triumph, but the Chairman alone. He was presented by his party as the brave and lone peacemaker, some sort of Robin Hood coming to lend a hand to the wretched and impoverished.

In the midst of that overwhelming and overpowering euphoria, little if anything was said about the autocratic practices of the Chairman, his absolute control over finances, and the well-known corruption of his institutions. Very few chose to recall that not so long before, Arafat had stopped paying the salaries of thousands of fighters and their families, and drastically slashed the financial support for the *Intifada*. All that was forgotten as the Chairman came on a "white horse" promising heaven for those dwelling in the hell of the Gaza camps.

But, before long, such authoritarian leadership practices of the Chairman began to be openly and seriously challenged by Arafat's increasingly-popular critics. Those against the Oslo Agreement began pointing their finger not only to the serious political problems of the pact, but also to the abrogation of the democratic process by the PLO Chairman. An agreement of this magnitude affecting the fate of the entire Palestinian people warrants a popular consensus, or at least a majority, they argued.

Yet Arafat continuously refused to convene the Palestine National Council (PNC), the Palestinian parliament-in-exile and the only legislative body with authority to ratify such an agreement. In fact, the PLO Chairman went so far as to nullify sections of the Palestinian National Charter, an act requiring a two-thirds majority vote of a PNC session held expressly for that purpose. The Chairman has also refused to hold a national referendum on the agreement, arguing that



photo: George Azar





Jewish settlers walk through an Arab market in Hebron

it would be a waste of time to do so.

As a result of these autocratic actions, many of the Chairman's own supporters have joined the loud choir of his critics. Well-known individuals, such as Haider Abdul Shafi, Hanan Ashrawi, poet and scholar Mahmoud Darwish, senior Fateh member and PLO Foreign Minister Farouq Qaddoumi, senior PLO official Shafiq Al-Hout, Palestinian scholar Edward Said, as well as countless others—including some leaders of political parties that support the Oslo agreement—have attacked the Chairman's policies, and some have abandoned him altogether. Many have gone so far as to question Arafat's credentials to lay the foundation of a civil society, the most important building blocks of which are the democratic process and the separation of powers. "We have not struggled all of our life to create an undemocratic despotic system of government on less than two percent of our land," stated one critic in an opposition rally. "Our national aspiration cannot be shrunk down to mere Bantustans."

What unites the vast array of Arafat's critics, ranging from those with egalitarian and democratic tendencies to those with theocratic ideologies, is the fear that he has abandoned the very principles and history that provided him with the position and stature he currently enjoys. Advocates of democracy are as concerned about the sort of society envisioned by the Chairman as they are concerned about the future of Diaspora Palestinians. They speak about duality in the struggle: social and national. A neo-colonial model such as that of Hong Kong or Singapore, where the people are transformed into cheap laborers without any say over their destiny or socio-economic situation, is a change that they do not welcome. They fear a government run solely by Arafat will open the door to human rights abuses, the disregard of political liberties, even prison camps for critics. Arafat has made it clear, they charge, that he will not allow any dissent to take place, and that he has taken it upon himself to silence all critics. In this context, these parties have been able to generate increasing support, as demonstrated through their winning leadership positions in Palestinian institutions.

The agreement completely marginalizes central issues such as settlements, borders, natural resources, Jerusalem, and statehood. In other words, it omits all aspects of Palestinian sovereignty. And, although it is important that the Palestinian people administer their own health care, education, communications, and most aspects of civil government, it is essential that they be able to legislate laws, protect their borders, govern their land, and fully determine their destiny without the interference or control of Israel. Not only does the agreement not address these at the present time, but, in fact, it creates an obstacle to dealing with these crucial issues in any foreseeable future.

Because the text of the agreement does not address fundamental aspects of Palestinian sovereignty, its implementation has been left open for interpretation. For instance, Israel argues that the illegal Jewish settlements will be outside the jurisdiction of the Palestinian authority, and that a system of dual government will have to be enacted. Arab Jerusalem will never be turned over to the Palestinian entity, Rabin has repeatedly declared, as he pointed to the massive construction

and settlement projects that have been carried out in the city. Never will millions of Palestinians be allowed to return, for that is a serious security threat to Israel, the Israeli Prime Minister also stated. And never will Israel go back to its 1967 borders. "Administrative autonomy is all that the Palestinians will get, and nothing more. If Mr. Arafat wants to promise them a state, then that is his problem. But that is not what they will get," said Rabin to his parliament. He, and other Israeli leaders, went on to argue that the essence of the agreement is to achieve stability for Israel by making Arab markets fully dependent on the Israeli economy, a NAFTA-like agreement in the Middle East.

In fact, and contrary to popular perception, "Israel has escalated its expropriation of Palestinian land and expansion of Jewish settlements and infrastructure in the Occupied Territories, since the signing of the Declaration of Principles." Such was the conclusion of a January 1994 joint statement by four well-recognized Palestinian institutions—the Palestine Human Rights Information Center, the Land Research Committee, the Palestine Geographic Research and Information Center of the Arab Studies Society, and the Society of St. Yves. The statement went on to document what they called "disturbing developments, all in violation of customary rules of international law, the individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people, and the terms of the Israel-PLO agreement."

According to the four organizations, "over 46,000 dunums of the West Bank land were expropriated from September 13 through the end of 1993; direct expansion of settlements occurred on 1,025 dunums, entailing the uprooting of 5,540 fruitful trees; eight new Israeli nature reserve projects were initiated on Palestinian lands, and eight new roads connecting settlements were constructed; 46 extended families were evicted from their lands, and 63 homes were demolished."

Now that the December 13 deadline for the start of Israeli military withdrawal has passed and negotiations are stalled—agreement could not be reached even over simple issues like the size of Jericho and the control of entry points—Arafat's promises to deliver an independent Palestinian state have suddenly become even more distant. As a result, the Chairman's political bloc has lost nearly all of the local elections held after the signing of the accords, including those for student and trade unions. And while his critics have been gaining momentum, his support in refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan has dwindled to almost nothing. Many Fateh fighters and *Intifada* activists, who early on obeyed his orders to surrender to the Israeli authorities, have once again joined the resistance movement. International donors have withheld much of their promised aid pointing to the serious incompetence of the

Chairman's proposed government. And Israel, gratified by the weakening of the PLO as a result of the agreement, now insists that if Arafat does not like their deal, he does not have to take it, for they have nothing to lose. Thus, Israel has skillfully placed the Palestinian leadership in a very difficult corner: either they further concede to all new Israeli demands, or admit their mistake in accepting the agreement in the first place, risking damnation by the Palestinian people for surrendering their rights and struggle. What a choice the Chairman has to make!

Defenders of Arafat's political line currently argue that it is the Israeli leadership that is hindering the peace process. They charge that while it is true that the letter of the Declaration of Principles does not provide much for the Palestinians at the present time, the spirit of the agreement, if respected by all parties, is certain to result in a Palestinian state in the near future. The supporters of the agreement once again are dependent on the "goodwill" of the Israeli government, and are driven by the international hoopla welcoming their steps.

They forget that last December, while the secret talks were underway in Oslo, Israel deported 415 Palestinians; and that during the same period Palestinian prisoners went on the largest-ever hunger strike in protest of the extreme conditions and torture they live under. They also do not remember that it was only a few months before the agreement was signed that Israel closed off the West Bank and Gaza, plunging the area into conditions of extreme economic stagnation and hardship. How then could a government that carries out such acts of subjugation, headed by a prime minister who, as Defense Minister in 1988, instituted and carried out the brutal policy of bone-breaking in order to quell the *Intifada*, deliver the Palestinian people to peace—all without guarantees, all without international enforcement of law, and all without an intent to establish peace?

A CURIOUS DOUBLE STANDARD CHARACTERIZES the perception of the international community of the Palestine Question versus that of South Africa. In Palestine, the movement is hailed and cheered on as it buckles under pressure into accepting socio-economic and political segregation and apartness—the very concept the people of South Africa have been struggling against for decades, and another form of the apartheid system that the world has denounced over and over again. It is as if the Palestinians are being told that the very best that can be done for them, and the most that they deserve, is an apartheid government and a Bantustan existence. The offer by Israel to completely enslave Palestine, and to forever destroy its cultural fabric and historical continuity, is not only accepted but, in fact, is



enthusiastically supported. Ironically, as Nelson Mandela enters history through a wide-open front door ushering in a new era of liberty for his people, Arafat opens a back door to economic slavery and political submission for "his" people.

"Not so," argue supporters of the Israeli peace movement. "For many years we have been attempting to get our government to recognize the PLO, and for many years we dreamed of a day like that of September 13," they tell you with an emotionally charged tone. "To us, 1993 is as important as 1948. Then we established a state, and now we secured its existence," a leading peacenik told me over a cup of coffee. I replied: "You are correct. Both years are historical landmarks. In 1948 our land was stolen from us as we were sent into exile, and in 1993 that process of theft became secure as we the victims granted it legitimacy."

Immediately their tone and demeanor completely changed: I became yet another annoying Palestinian dwelling on the past. "Can't you let go?" they asked me, when in fact they were commanding me to do so. "How could I?" I asked. "Would I ask you to forget *your* people's holocaust? Don't ask me to forget *mine!*"

They were enraged that I had challenged their hegemony over suffering, and dared to place my people at the center of our own history, where we truly belong, instead of at its periphery. But my attempt to explain the centrality of a nation's historical experience and collective memory to its well-being only made sense with regards to Jewish history. I, and my entire people, remained "the Other"—vague, obscure, void of humanity and without features or details, people to be dealt with, and a continuous nuisance to be silenced one way or another.

Of course, a peacenik never fails to express liberal pity as he or she faces a victim, especially their own victim. And we were an object of such a pity. "We understand your anger," they said in the usual patronizing tone that typifies their attitude. "But you must see that the signing of the agreement was a real victory for the Israeli peace movement," they urged me. "Indeed it is. But is it a real victory for the victim, the Palestinian people?" I wondered out loud as they looked at me again as if I were transparent and unreal.

I then challenged my friends to materialize their demands for peace by pressing their government to accept the Palestinian collective right to return, self-determination, and full unconditional statehood. These are all rights that the Israelis enjoy, while the Palestinians are denied them. I invoked the examples of dual and unequal systems of government such as that of South Africa. Segregation is not the answer, and never was, I tried to explain; only total and full equality and rights, paramount among

which is the national right to self-determination and statehood. But I was barely understood. I had to be thankful for the recognition granted to the PLO. I had to be thankful for finally being granted the right to be who we are—Palestinians.

I wondered as I departed my peacenik friends about the response of the peace and justice movement in the U.S. Would I be congratulated by my long-time activist friends? Would they understand my concerns, or should I tip-toe around issues so as not to offend them? I wondered because of the historical perception associated with "me and my kind." For years, the dominant American view of the Palestinian was painted by the vulgar and racist depictions of the media and policy-makers—a view which affected all people including peaceniks and activists. I remember the days our community had to struggle to ensure entry of a banner in favor of Palestinian rights in a march or a rally. And believe me, we were rejected a lot more than once. Somehow, I was always given the feeling that our suffering did not count as really human. And when it did, it had to be qualified and counteracted by the presence of a Jewish person, or a discussion of the holocaust—as if Palestinian existence only mattered relative to that of Jews.

"Careful," a close American friend told me when I returned to the U.S., "you don't want to be seen as a rejectionist." Immediately I began recalling the old days when, by simply identifying myself as a Palestinian, I used to be perceived as a troublemaker. Like all Palestinian activists, I was fine when I rejected the dictatorships of Somoza, Pinochet, Marcos, and Papa Doc. I was accepted and cheered as I spoke out against the apartheid regime and nuclear proliferation—but not when I spoke about going home to my motherland. Then I became a nuisance. And today, I have similar worries. For I *will* speak out against the betrayal of my cause and the wholesale dismissal of my people. I *will* demand not only human rights, but full national rights. I *will not* settle for a bantustan, or a canton. I *will not* accept being relegated to the margin of history. I *will not* accept going home to Palestine as a visitor or a tourist anymore. No one should issue me a visa to return to my motherland. Indeed, the time has come for us the dispossessed, the exiled, and the nation-less, to be granted what we have long been denied—the collective right to return, to self-determination, and to statehood without any reservations. Yes, the time has come for Palestine to be on the map of nation-states.

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It's  
**Hard**  
 to **Forget...**  
 the **Pain** of  
**Apartheid**  
**Still**  
**Lingers On,**  
 and **I Can't**  
**Stop Crying**

by Simon Nkoli

"Emergency  
 Series, V,"  
 by Garth Erasmus

**O**RANGE FREE STATE IS ONE OF FOUR PROVINCES IN South Africa. We have four beautiful provinces in this motherland, the Transvaal, where I was born and where I am living, Cape Province, Natal, and Orange Free State.

My parents did not bring me up like other children. They left me in the care of my maternal grandparents who lived in the Orange Free State, where both my mama and papa were born and brought up. I was not told why my parents left their home and went to Gauteng, the city of gold. Maybe I was too little to understand. Later I was told that they went to Gauteng to look for a better life. Now, looking back at those days, weeks, months, and twelve years that I was living in Grootwaal, yes, I do understand why my parents went away to look for a better life in the city of gold.

Where I was living was a farming area. Only white people owned farms in the Orange Free State. No, I am wrong, in fact

in the whole country white people owned farms. In the Orange Free State people who owned and still own farms are the Afrikaners. They are well known for their hatred, racism, and exploitation of black people. These farmers are protected by both the police and law—at least at the time when I was a child, living in the Orange Free State. There were lots of terrible things, including torture and murder, that took part in those farms. And white people got away with it...

Boy! I should reveal one incident that still comes back to me, even though I was only six years old at the time. My grandmama would scold me when I tried to ask her the question, "Why did that white man kill a person?" "Shut up, you little brat," she would scream at me, "you ask a lot, and if you don't stop he will kill you."

The day before the killing, my grandpapa was very worried. I knew something was wrong because grandpapa was always a

cheerful person—singing hymns and, since he was illiterate, always asking my Aunt Sophia to read some scriptures from the Bible. That evening we children went to bed without the singing of hymns. Grandpapa did not tell us *ditshomo* fairy tales. Off to bed we went....

"He wants everybody there!" I was awakened by grandpapa trying to whisper to my grandmama. I snored a little bit. (I was always told that I snored.) But I heard everything. *Mlungu*, a white man, had lost three sheep and he was going to punish a man. He was going to tie a man to a tree until he felt no pain.

Grandpapa knew that the man was going to die and no one was going to help him. Grandpapa was talking from experience. This brutal killing had happened before—and was happening all the time in neighboring farms. "I don't want the children to see this," my grandpapa said as if he was arguing. "I don't want the children...I don't want...especially Simon, he is so sensitive."

Whether grandpapa liked it or not he had to obey the *Mlungu*. I was very nervous, and I felt very sorry for grandpapa. He had been on that farm since 1926 and all his children were born on that farm. He was the oldest of the farm workers. Until that morning I had never asked anyone including grandpapa why he limped, why he used a handmade walking stick. When I finally asked him, he looked at me with tears rolling down his brown pale face. I would have cried if I were him, but tough men didn't cry. He did not answer my question and I did not pursue the matter. Anyway, who the hell was I, a mere curious six-year-old boy. My time would come, yes. When I was a grown-up man, I would ask questions.

I was going to see a black man beaten to death. Everybody was forced to come, including children and grandparents—even the parents of the man who was going to die. Who was the man anyway? I felt like asking, but adults don't give answers to children. I knew everybody on the farm, because I was always hanging around the men. They liked me for my horse riding, fishing, and hunting. I hoped it would not be somebody I knew well; it shouldn't be anyone. Everyone wants to live.

People were so passive, so afraid. They were so quiet. They were prepared to see something that they didn't want to see. They tried to pretend to be brave, but some could not control themselves and I saw women sobbing. The white man was about to come.

Children, of course, including myself, were sitting on the lawn playing with rocks. Many were unaware of what was going to happen, except the ones who had overheard the adults' conversation. "Stop it now, children, the *Mlungu* is coming." We ran helter-skelter to find our female guardians.

The *Mlungu* was very big, tall with eyes like a cat. I wondered whether he was a human at all because I always saw him from a distance. But that day, in the

late morning, the *Mlungu* was very close to me. He was pale, very pale. He spoke in Afrikaans something that we children and perhaps some women could not understand.

As he continued speaking, two men approached holding a tired-looking naked black man. If it had not been for the yelling and wailing of Mrs. Mofokeng I wouldn't have known that the man who was going to die was Jacob—Jacob the man who was so close to me. Maybe he was my lover—my first lover that I never knew. For the sake of three missing sheep my friend Jacob lost his life. A white man killed him, and because I was a child I was not allowed to ask why a white man killed a black man.

I grew up wondering—and I left the farm in 1971 asking the same questions. It's been hard for me to forget, especially things that were happening to black people. At the end of the day, I decided to fight, and I am still fighting for the rights of all people. I can't stop now for the pains of apartheid still haunt my thought and I can't stop crying. □

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*Simon Nkoli is a 35-year old, HIV+, African anti-apartheid and gay activist living in Johannesburg, South Africa. His anti-apartheid activities began when he was 20, as a student protesting the inferior education given to Blacks under the apartheid regime. He was arrested in 1984, along with 22 others, in what became known as the Delmas Treason Trial, following a rent strike in the Vaal that ended with 75 people shot by the South African police.*

*Jailed for 15 months before even being charged, Nkoli and ten of the other defendants were eventually acquitted of 12 charges of treason, subversive activities, terrorism, murder and furthering the aims of the ANC (African National Congress) and the South African Communist Party. The conviction of the other 11 defendants was later overturned.*

*Nkoli is active in the Johannesburg West Branch of the ANC, where he has held a number of offices. His current responsibilities include voter education for the upcoming elections in April 1994.*

*His gay activism began with joining—and shortly thereafter quitting—the Gay Association of South Africa, a largely middle-class, white, male-dominated group. He then joined a non-racial group which later became the Gay and Lesbian Organization of Witwatersrand (GLOW). He is currently co-chair of the Gay People's Health Forum, which is concerned with a range of gay and lesbian health issues, including AIDS and HIV, gay bashing, and discrimination in medical treatment of gays and lesbians. Nkoli is also an organizer of the South African contingent for Unity 94, the Gay Games in New York.*

*His writing also appears in The Invisible Ghetto: Lesbian and Gay Writings from South Africa, edited by Matthew Krouse (assisted by Kim Berman), available from COSAW Publishers (Congress of South African Writers), PO Box 421007, Fordsburg, 2033 Johannesburg, South Africa.*



photos: Alan Senauke & Sandro Tucci

# Contested Ground

the struggle for democracy in  
**Burma**

by Alan Senauke

**I** REMEMBER BEST THE FACES OF CHILDREN. A fourteen-year-old Burmese Shan girl sold over the border to a Thai brothel in the Golden Triangle. Karenni kids with tattered clothes and bellies starting to swell from malnutrition at a camp for displaced Burmese ethnics a few dusty miles inside Thailand. A twelve-year-old Karen army boy with a handmade cigarette and an automatic weapon slung

on his shoulder, playing at war games that are not games. A feverish baby with an IV taped to her arm, sick with malaria and intestinal disease. Eleven-year-old girls jumping rope at the Daughter's Education Project in Mae Sai, for the moment safe from the flesh trade and from AIDS. These are only a handful of memories.

I don't really know the faces of the junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council, or SLORC, as it's familiarly known. Rangoon and fabled Mandalay are just glossy pictures. Chances are

I won't see them until democracy is established. But I see SLORC's victims in my dreams: tribal people driven in flames from their villages, old men and women conscripted for deadly work carrying supplies over the mountains, revolutionary students, monks in the jungle, intellectuals and activists far from family and home in the cities. How is it these people can still offer a smile in the midst of great suffering, and share their small rations with a strange guest or an old friend?

In the winter of 1991 and again in 1992, I traveled on two week-long witness delegations to the Thai/Burma border, a journey organized by the International Network of Engaged Buddhists at the invitation of resistance organizations on both sides of the border. My own experience of Burma as guest of rebel students, monks, and ethnic peoples didn't take me very far into the country. But what we saw of courage, despair, resistance, disease, and poverty left me with images and concerns forever etched in my mind.

Our 1991 journey to Manerplaw, the rough-hewn ethnic Karen military town that head-

quarters the Karen Army, the national government in exile, and the All Burma Student Democratic Front, came at a dramatic hour. With the rainy months quickly approaching, SLORC's generals had vowed to capture and destroy the town during the current winter offensive. But we didn't know that at the time. From Mae Son Lap on the Thai side, we traveled down the Salween and Moie Rivers in long flat-bottomed boats propelled noisily by small truck diesels. The forests and hills around us were thick and green, scraped bare in places for now-empty Karen settlements. Our papers were scrutinized at rebel checkpoints along the river, where young soldiers warily eyed our strange contingent of monks, Thais, and Westerners.

In Manerplaw we were treated graciously, given what bare, clean floors were available for sleeping. Our meetings with various factions, leaders, officers, and functionaries were friendly but often distant and full of speechify-

## A NATION UNDER SIEGE

My sketch of recent history just barely alludes to the complexities of Burma's crisis. Some of the issues below must also be seen if we are to understand our own relationship to this distant struggle. For a still deeper perspective, I recommend reading some of the books listed in the bibliography, particularly Aung San Suu Kyi's *Freedom From Fear*.

### HUMAN RIGHTS & REFUGEES

More than 400,000 Burmese have fled their homes, seeking refuge in Thailand, Bangladesh, India, and China. Many thousands of others have been pressed into service as porters for the military, where they face daily violence, disease, rape, and brutal servitude. The lives of both groups are marginal at best, often lacking even food, water, medicine, and shelter. Displaced people in Bangladesh and Thailand are not permitted to work, cultivate the land, or own property. They are stateless, without even the minimum dignity accorded to refugees, since few Asian nations are willing to acknowledge the illegitimacy of SLORC's rule, bound up economically as they are with the Burmese military. Thousands of intellectuals and clergy are also in jail or exile for speaking their mind.

### THE ENVIRONMENT

Burma's 34 million acres of rainforests contains 80 percent of the world's teak reserves, along with other rare tropical hardwoods, most of them in the contested territories of the ethnic minorities. Trees are being cut at a rate that rivals logging in the Amazon, more than 1.2 million acres per year. While this kind of plunder by Thai, Japanese, Chinese, and Malaysian companies is





ing. In the damp heat we consumed many gallons of tea, bottled water, and, incongruously, cans of Pepsi and other soft drinks hauled across and down the river from Thailand.

The backdrop for these discussions was a fierce, ongoing battle for Sleeping Dog Mountain, strategic heights that overlooked Manerplaw and the Thai Border. As we talked, there was the sound of not-so-distant mortar fire. We would stop a moment, take a deep breath and then go on. The men we met with spoke confidently of victory, but they looked drawn and weary. In a day or two, we would return to the comforts of Thailand. Most of them would be back at the front.

The day that we left to visit refugee camps across the river, the Burmese launched their first air strikes on Manerplaw, swinging their Yugoslav jets eastward over Thai airspace to bomb the town from the rear. Thankfully there were few casualties, but several of the buildings we met in were destroyed, while people sheltered in shallow dirt bunkers. This was the start of a bitter assault on Manerplaw that just barely failed, persisting for the following six weeks, claiming several hundred lives on both sides. Two years later this is still contested ground.

My journey in 1992 was less dramatic, but somehow more disturbing. By train and van we came north from Bangkok and Chiang Mai towards the Golden Triangle, where Burma, Laos, and Thailand meet, and China looms just a few miles away. In the raw border town of Mai Sai anything can be bought and sold: opium, Buddhist treasures, gems, Chinese household goods, young women. The crowded streets and markets closed up with the coming of evening, and a feeling of menace rose with the moon, the only place in all my Thailand travels that my street sense said to watch my step.

A little to the south and west, not actually so far in miles, large settlements of displaced tribal people lived in conditions I had never witnessed before: a village of 1,500 without running water—it had to be carried a mile from the spring; a handful of medicine, some quinine and antibiotics, a few rolls of bandage. How could this meet the needs of desperate people? With the annual rains again approaching, many of the thatched palm and bamboo shacks didn't even have a roof. We stood in the dust with our own grim faces and tears. The small stores of rice, beans, oil, and fish paste we had brought as an offering would not go very far. Would it even be enough to feed all the children?

### A HISTORY OF TYRANNY

Under the tyranny of General Ne Win, along with Ne Win's xenophobic Burmese Socialist Pro-

unconscionable, the long-term damage to watershed, farmland, fisheries, and climate can hardly be calculated. There is also sharp competition among Asian and Western corporations for fishing concessions, and exploration rights to Burma's vast oil and mineral reserves.

### PROSTITUTION

From what I've witnessed in the Golden Triangle, women's lives and bodies are not valued by the present regime. On both sides of the Thai/Burma border, young girls, eleven years and up, are sold into prostitution by often desperate parents who have no other way to keep their families alive. AIDS is burning swiftly across Asia; few prostitutes will even live to see the age of 30. In the Thai town of Mai Sai there are more than 40 brothels, largely staffed by Burmese girls and Thai pimps. Many of these girls move on to Chiang Mai and Bangkok as they become more schooled in their trade. Others can be found living in virtual slavery in Hong Kong, the Philippines, West Germany, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere across the world. Those who

are caught in the net of immigration control and repatriated to Burma are subject to imprisonment, forced labor, and extra-judicial murder.

### DRUG TRADE

Seventy-five percent of the heroin in our own neighborhoods is grown in Burma, according to DEA figures supplied to the U.S. Senate. Since SLORC took power in 1988, the chemicals needed for refining raw opium into heroin have become widely available even in remote areas, as the generals, particularly intelligence head Khin Nyunt, forge stronger ties with drug traders in the Golden Triangle region. All along the trafficking routes—in Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Singapore, southern China, and even in Burma itself—addiction is on the rise, and with it rises the specter of an AIDS epidemic throughout Southeast Asia.

gram Party, and the current regime of brutal generals, Burma's great human and natural resources have been squandered in civil war, spent for weapons of destruction. In recent years Burma has achieved dubious status as a UN-designated "least developed country," where many of the 40 million Burmese people earn less than \$200 per year. In a nation that was formerly known as "Asia's rice bowl," even rice with a bit of fish paste is often a luxury. In fact one can't even find Burma on a map today. SLORC has renamed their country the Union of Myanmar. The ancient capital Rangoon is now Yangon, and many other names have been changed, daily reminders of SLORC's self-appointed power over many millions of desperate citizens.

Under this same corrupt leadership, Burma's most famous daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, lives under close house arrest and constant surveillance, silenced by an illegal government that fears her message of peace and democracy may be heard and taken up in a country that has long lacked both. Thousands fill unmarked graves. Many more fill the jails without benefit of trial. Along the borders with Thailand, China, and Bangladesh, hundreds of thousands of displaced

find a precarious exist-almost invisible to the outside world.

The roots of Burma's suffering are deep and tangled. A patchwork region of highly independent ethnic minorities—Burman, Shan, Karen, Mon, Arakanese—were annexed as a province of India after the last Anglo-Burman War in 1886. The customary British colonial strategy of divide-and-rule took advantage of existing differences and tensions. Indian civil servants were brought in to run civil affairs, so a native middle class familiar with Western administration and technology never developed. The timber-rich

ethnic nationality areas, circling the more densely populated central region, were administered separately as restricted areas, driving a wedge even deeper between these peoples and the majority of Burmans. This remained the status quo until 1937 and the prelude to World War II.

The war took a terrible toll on Burma, where a scorched-earth policy by retreating British and Japanese forces devastated indigenous agriculture. Initially a core of young Burman intellectuals sided with the Japanese, who courted them with an anti-British, anti-colonial line. A generation of Burma's future leaders, Aung San (Aung San Suu Kyi's father), U Nu, and Ne Win took secret military training in Japan, then marched back to their country behind Japan's army of occupation. (Japanese occupation was bitterly opposed by many of the ethnic groups, whose loyalty had been bought by the British with assurances of future autonomy.) But these young leaders soon found that Japanese domination was even crueler than the British, and began to form the first delicate alliances with both pro-Western ethnic peoples and pro-Communist rebels.

After the war British promises of autonomy were not kept. While Ne Win was consolidating a national army from the anti-Japanese resistance, Aung San was simultaneously negotiating with the British, and with the Karen and other ethnic groups. It was a masterful balancing act, moving towards independence and representative democracy. But this hope was wiped out when right-wing assassins machine-gunned Aung San and six other ministers in July of 1947. His friend U Nu tried to fulfill Aung San's mission, declaring an independent Burma on January 4, 1948. But neither the ethnic minorities nor the pro-Communist forces who had spearheaded the war against Japan had been offered a place in this government. Within a year they had taken up arms against the new government.

The civil war begun then continues to this day. With rebels closing in on the cities, the army, under Ne Win, took control from 1958 to 1960, and again in 1962. Pursuing his own "Burmese Way to Socialism," he expelled the Indian and Chinese administrators and managers, replacing them with inexperienced Burman military officers, and closed the door on all Western contact and investment. In 1974 as the insurgency was growing, Ne Win attempted to legitimize himself, imposing a new constitution, sanctioning one-party rule, and eliminating even the most fundamental human rights.

In 1987 Ne Win astonishingly declared the three highest-denomination *kyat* bank notes worthless and issued 45 and 90 *kyat* bills, based on his fascination with the number nine. The de-monetization wiped out many people's savings, and Ne Win's looting of the economy funded a military that consumed more than 50 percent of the GNP. In 1988,



U Nu Win



students, monks, and intellectuals spoke out forcefully, calling for an end to war and for a federal democracy recognizing minority rights. All through the spring, demonstrations and the army's violent response intensified; the death toll ran into hundreds. Universities and high schools were shut down—many are still closed. And for the following year even primary and elementary schools were closed. As the nation ground to a halt, Ne Win made a show of retirement, leading to even greater chaos and repression. His appointed successor, General Sein Lwin, was, if anything, even more hated and feared than Ne Win, having led bloody repressions of urban dissent in 1964, 1974, and in earlier months of 1988.

Two weeks later on August 8, protest reached a peak and was met by a paroxysm of state violence that left more than 1,000 dead—without managing to silence the call for democracy. The army was withdrawn in confusion, Sein Lwin stepped down, and an incredible flowering of free expression and hope ensued. In these brief, promising days a new leader emerged. Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been living with her husband and children in England, was in Rangoon visiting her dying mother. As daughter of Burma's most revered post-war leader, she wears a mantle of moral authority and fearlessness quite naturally, giving peaceful voice to the people's yearning for freedom.

A month later on September 18, 1988, realizing that their 30-year grip on Burma was slipping away, the generals declared martial law and established SLORC. The killings began in earnest the next day. Machine guns swept the streets from the tops of buildings and overpasses. Demonstrators and bystanders were murdered without warning, many carried away to mass graves or mass cremations where the cries of the wounded could be heard amid the pile of corpses. No one knows precisely how many died in these few days, but estimates run from 5,000 to 20,000. Many thousands more, particularly students and young monks, fled to the border areas, where they linked up with the ethnic Karen, Kachin, and others who had long been involved in armed struggle against the central government and Burman hegemony.

As SLORC consolidated its power, the generals realized that the nation had almost no cash reserves either to feed or arm itself. After so many years of isolation, they turned to Japan, Thailand, the U.S., and UN agencies for loans and development funds. To curry favor with the West the junta promised timely elections. But SLORC's numerous delays, rigidly controlled media, and impossible campaign regulations failed to contain the hunger for democracy. Ninety-three political parties put up candidates for election in May of 1990. Of these, Aung San Suu Kyi's party, The National League for Democracy (NLD), won 392 of 485 seats in a new government; ethnic minority parties opposed to SLORC claimed victory in 65 other contests. SLORC's National Unity Party won only ten seats, two percent of the contested places.

But a new government was never formed. Within days

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi



original photo: Sandro Tucci

the military had arrested many elected representatives from the NLD, carrying them off to the notorious Insein jail. Some of them are still imprisoned, some were executed on fabricated charges of treason and insurrections. Others fled to the border region, a second wave of exiles. Burma's two most respected leaders, U Nu, who led the only attempted democracy Burma has ever known, and Aung San Suu Kyi, were placed under stringent house arrest in Rangoon. Four years later, Suu remains a prisoner, silenced in her own land, revered around the world. SLORC recently extended her sentence for a fifth year, piously asserting that she is free to leave Burma any time she wishes.

Over the last three years SLORC's policies have carried repression from the cities far into the interior, displacing several million people in countless villages, driving them into exile or into strategic hamlets reminiscent of the Vietnam War. Some of these villagers are pressed into service as porters for the army, used up like pack animals until they drop from exhaustion. There are reports that SLORC has marched villagers into known mine fields to clear a

1992 and 1993 again forced SLORC to offer a pretense of motion towards democracy. With much fanfare they announced preliminary meetings to form a new constitutional convention. But few of those elected in 1990 chose to collaborate, and the proposed gathering was strongly denounced by the provisional National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, headquartered in the Karen border town of Manerplaw. In March of 1993, a delegation of former Nobel Peace Prize laureates, including the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu and Oscar Arias, added their own principled protest against this sham of democracy, demanding and failing to meet with sister laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon. They got no further than the insurgent border.

### GEOPOLITICS

Many analysts think that China is a key player in Burma, as it has been in Cambodia, Tibet, and elsewhere in Asia. With the Cold War coming to a close, China is seizing the opportunity to become a "great power." Its vast commercial and arms sales to Burma (more than \$3 billion) and growing invest-

ments provide a crucial foothold in South and Southeast Asia. This has a terribly destructive effect on the Burmese people. Inexpensive and relatively well-made Chinese consumer goods, like rice cookers, cigarettes and crockery, have displaced locally-made goods. Weapons have flowed freely across the border from China's Yunnan province for many years. In decades past, China avidly supported the now-defunct Communist Party of Burma (CPB), often using it as a buffer against remnants of Kuomintang nationalist forces that carved out fiefdoms on the border.

But even before the CPB's collapse in 1989, there were clear signs

that China's leaders saw their strategic interests in other terms. General Ne Win, long reviled as "Burma's Chiang Kai-shek," was invited in May of 1985 for the first in a continuing series of state visits to China, and welcomed as an "old friend" by Deng



photo: Alan Senauke

path with their own blood. The seasonal offensives on ethnic insurgents and students have extracted a great price on all sides, but pro-democracy allies have held on against all odds.

International political and economic pressures in



Xiaoping. Today many of SLORC's modern weapons—including tanks, jet fighters, and rockets—are purchased with profits from Burma's heroin trade via the Chinese Polytechnologies Corporation, a corporation managed by Deng Xiaoping's son-in-law. Looking beyond the simple profit motive, as the Soviet Navy is dismantled and U.S. forces are drawn elsewhere in the world, China can at last implement its vision of a blue-water navy. Burma has been courted as an important ally, with deep water ports necessary for China to extend military power across the Indian Ocean.

Military goals notwithstanding, other ASEAN nations (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei), along with Japan, Korea, Taiwan, etc., are similarly involved in the intense competition for new markets and new sources of labor and resources in a region where economic development is still surging ahead of much of the world.

### THERE IS MUCH TO DO

Amnesty International is deeply committed to the cause of human rights in Burma. The U.S. government, including the president and Congress, are on record against the abuses of SLORC, and have instituted a ban on textile imports, which, while symbolic, has almost no economic impact. More to the point would be further conditioning or revocation of China's Most Favored Nation trade status for the scope of its arms sales to Burma and throughout the region. U.S. corporations with capital investment in Burma such as Amoco, Unocal Petroleum, Pepsi Cola, Dean Hardwoods, and others are targets of first opportunity for letterwriting and consumer boycotts.

I would especially encourage you to support the organizations below that work directly with the Burmese insurgents and those at risk. In each case these are people that we at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship have met and continue to work with. We are also happy to provide you with further information, analyses, and to serve as a channel for any funds you may have in support of the Burmese. □

*Alan Senauke is National Coordinator of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. He is also an ordained priest at the Berkeley Zen Center, where he lives with his family.*

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### RESOURCES

*Buddhist Peace Fellowship, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley CA 94704, (510) 525-8596.*

Acts as a clearinghouse in the U.S. for information and funds related to Burmese freedom. Slide show is available.

*Burmese Relief Centre, P.O. Box 48, Chiangmai Univ. Chiang Mai 50002, Thailand.*

Small but deeply respected organization providing food and medical relief on both sides of the Thai/Burma border, regardless of any factional alignments. In many places they represent the only outside support.

*Daughter's Education Project, P.O. Box 10, Mae Sai, Chiang Rai 57310, Thailand.*

Provides an alternative to prostitution for young girls, offering basic education, vocational training, with an emphasis on collective values and self-esteem.

*All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF), P.O. Box 22, Mae Sot, 63110, Thailand.*

The main organization of students in the border region. They provide medical support and education to refugees and serve as combatants with the alliance of ethnic armed forces, the NDF.

*Southeast Asian Information Network (SAIN), P.O. Box 217, Chiangmai Univ, Chiang Mai 50002, Thailand.*

An organization of non-violent activists who train environmental documentation and journalism. They have excellent contacts with all groupings among the insurgents and are developing first-rate documentary materials.

# HAITI'S SEASON

Waiting  
Out the Storm

**"I cannot see this kind of situation lasting much longer without some kind of explosion."**

— Father Antoine Adrien

Haitian priest and supporter of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide

During his presidency campaign, Bill Clinton promised to reverse the Bush administration's policies towards Haiti. Pledging to use every effort to return to power Haiti's deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, he also called for an end to the forced repatriation of Haitian refugees.

Now, one year later, Clinton has reversed himself, his promises unfulfilled. President Aristide remains in exile, while U.S. officials attempt to marginalize and discredit him. The Organization of American States (OAS) and UN embargo is ineffective—easily thwarted by the coup leaders but devastating to the poor. The Haitian military flaunts its power with a reign of

terror against rising opposition. Haitian refugees continue to be picked up and sent back to Haiti by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The following series of articles focuses attention on the complexities of the Haitian crisis. In addition to an interview with Pierre Labossiere, a long-time Haitian-American activist, we are presenting two first-hand accounts of daily life in Haiti. An update on the current political situation follows the January 1994 Miami Conference convened by President Clinton.

For more information about what you can do to support the struggle in Haiti, or the name of a local support organization, contact the Washington Office on Haiti (202-543-7095).



# OF TERROR

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*Yellow Silence of Morning's Light" by Francesca Schiffrin*

# Interview with Pierre Labossiere

**B**reakthrough: This must be a difficult period of time for Haitians who have worked so hard for the return of President Aristide.

Pierre: This moment is part of our people's ongoing struggle, for decades, for years, I might say for centuries. We have achieved great gains, in the sense that the struggle of the Haitian people has, for the first time, hit the consciousness of freedom-loving people throughout the world, and there has been mass mobilization in Europe, in the U.S., Canada, and throughout Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean, around the issue of Haiti, which was something that didn't exist two years ago. People were not aware of Haiti. And we've made tremendous progress in that respect.

But I see a lot of cynicism from the international community. It's been a cruel game of psychological warfare. Raise the expectations of people, tell Haitians "we're on your side," then do nothing to get rid

of the military. We've seen a retreat—not a serious commitment—from the leaders of the international community, to carry out their promises. I just think that we've learned another bitter lesson, which is something that in our struggle we always learn. And we keep moving on. The name of our people's movement for freedom in Haiti is "Lavalas." It means "flood." You know that you can't stop the water. Water always manages to go over an obstacle or around it, and that's how we Haitians look at our long struggle for freedom.

**BT:** What role has the Clinton administration played in the Haitian crisis?

Pierre: Clinton's policy has been very flawed from the start. During the campaign in 1992, he made some very strong statements about Haiti. In fact, if people mentioned Clinton's name in Haiti, they were liable to be arrested—that's how the military perceived him. But when he became President, he started saying that Bush was right and vowed to continue the repatriation policy. And so it's been mixed signals from the very beginning.

The repatriation policy spoke more

loudly than anything else. To take the refugees and to send them back to Haiti regardless of any claims that they have of persecution, this eliminated all the good words that he might have been saying. The result just flowed from that—the criticisms of Aristide, the pressures on Aristide to compromise with the military, the refusal to put serious pressure on the military. We've seen this before—so many betrayals. This is just another one. That's how I see Clinton's policies

**BT:** What could the international community do that would put real pressure on the Haitian military and create conditions for President Aristide's return?

Pierre: First of all, there must be a different resolution to the problem of Haitian refugees. There must be a regional solution to the problem. Right now, the U.S. is arresting refugees on the high seas, and sending them back to the very criminals they are fleeing from. These people need temporary safe haven somewhere in the region—whether it's in the U.S., Cuba, or the Bahamas.

Secondly, the sanctions must be implemented—not in the half-hearted way they are now being done. Freeze the assets of the coup leaders and their families. Stop all commercial flights in and out of Haiti. Hit the rich guys. Make sure that the Dominican Republic supports the sanctions as well, since that's where most supplies are coming in to break the embargo. Haiti doesn't have borders—except with the Dominican Republic. And the U.S. has control of the seas. They have all kinds of Navy ships around Haiti. When the U.S. says, "We can't implement an effective embargo," to me it's a bunch of baloney. When U.S. leaders say that, it means the U.S. is actually telling the Haitian military to go on ahead; we'll work with you guys.

Right now, the military is transforming Haiti into a major drug trans-shipment point. These guys are making big bucks on the drug trade. So there is a lot at stake there. Yet you don't hear the Clinton people talking about this. You don't see the international community condemning these thugs as war criminals, or holding them accountable to the Geneva Convention. And they are killing anyone who opposes them. They are not going to leave easily. However, if they felt a threat of a *serious* action, both from within Haiti and also from outside, then they would have to pack up.

**BT:** Do you think the U.S. is content to see the military ruling Haiti for the foreseeable future?

Pierre: I think so. I really do. First of all, many U.S. officials don't like Aristide—as you can see from the







photo: Timothy Pershing

CIA leaks about his "psychological problems" and State Department leaks about how "inflexible" he has been in negotiations. Aristide is considered dangerous, too radical, too much concerned with the poor. These officials think a Lavalas government would make Haiti less stable for business. And remember, many companies have fled the U.S. and gone to Haiti, as part of the Caribbean Basin Initiative that Reagan set up, and are paying people about 14 cents an hour. So these companies actually form a strong lobbying group. And they lobby for the military regime in Haiti. They argue that the Haitian military is friendly to business, that Haiti doesn't have environmental regulations, that you can make a good profit there. These companies have traditionally had a powerful voice, and this continues within the Clinton administration.

*BT: You've talked about the Lavalas movement. Could you explain the origins and goals of Lavalas?*

**Pierre:** Lavalas is a movement that's very new. It started around the campaign of Father Aristide. As I said before, Lavalas means "flood." And the imagery is simple: it's many streams coming together, forming a flood. And this is precisely what it is. The history of the resistance movement in Haiti has been ongoing, even from the 1500s, when the first Africans who were captured and forced into slavery arrived in Haiti. People have never accepted their oppression. We've had peasant organizations, even during the presidency of Baby Doc (Jean-Claude Duvalier). People were always organizing, but they worked underground because of the repression. In 1984, all these forces came together and toppled Baby Doc. That set off a new wave of organizing among students, teachers, peasants, women's organizations. The military was nervous—and they increased their killings, organizing the Macoutes to form death squads against the people.

There was an election scheduled for 1990. The U.S. wanted Marc Bazin to win. So did the Macoutes and the military. Bazin got millions of dollars from the U.S. A diplomat, quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, said that the U.S. had done everything for Bazin "except vote for him." So the situation looked very bleak. People came to Aristide and told him he must run for president, and that they would put their lives on the line for him. I call it a stroke of genius. They ran Father Aristide for president as the candidate of

the Lavalas movement. Aristide won overwhelmingly, over a field of 11 candidates, with 67 percent of the vote. The people formed a massive flood that began to sweep

the refuse from Haiti. That's how Lavalas got its start.

The goals of the Lavalas movement are still the same—to create in Haiti a true democratic society, with social and economic justice. To eliminate corruption in the country. To eliminate the drug trade. To end the human rights abuses that are a daily facet of Haitian life. To have decent schooling for people. To have an atmosphere where workers can organize their associations, their trade unions, and participate fully without the fear of being hounded, persecuted, and killed. To allow Haitian culture to flourish in an atmosphere of pride. To allow our people to practice voodoo without persecution. To put an end to this tragedy of poor people leaving their families to work at slave wages in the Dominican Republic, or to take their chances with the sharks.

Since the coup, the movement is pretty much underground. Much of what was built during the eight months of Father Aristide's government has been destroyed—silos of grain have been burned, schools and clinics destroyed, activists killed. Literacy workers are being hunted down. There is a generalized attempt to reimpoverish the population and destroy anything that the movement did to improve people's lives.

*BT: Since Clinton sent the Coast Guard to prevent Haitian refugees from fleeing, the story of the refugees has all but disappeared from the media. Could you tell us what is happening—both here and in Haiti—in regard to the refugee issue?*

**Pierre:** There are people fleeing Haiti all the time across the border through the Dominican Republic even though it's not rosy there at all for them. It's a hellish place for Haitians. People are still taking boats despite the blockade. The crime and the outrage is that, under the Clinton administration, the Coast Guard and Navy intercept those boats, arrest the refugees, and turn them over to the Haitian military.

Two days after the assassination of Guy Malary, Minister of Justice in the Aristide government, a boatload of Haitian refugees was intercepted by the Coast Guard and taken back to Haiti. Think about that. Here are people fleeing terror and the only

response of the U.S. is to send them back.

If a boat makes it to the U.S., those Haitians are immediately arrested. One young man that I know spent about eight months in a Texas jail. And I heard recently that there are at least eight Haitians in a Louisiana jail who have been there for more than a year. What's their crime? Trying to stay alive.

You have to understand what goes on in Haiti. I just talked to a sister who is there now, who sent us a fax about a recent incident. An old couple—the wife is 80, the husband 84—had some land that a Macoute wanted. In 1986 he attempted to force them off but the people in the neighborhood stood up against him, so he was forced to back down. But this time he came and he asked them to sell again, and they refused. Two days later, in the middle of the

night, he kidnapped the old couple. Next day, on November 11, they found the old woman stuffed in a drainage pipe with both of her hands cut and large machete wounds. Nobody has found the husband. We assume he's dead also.

This is why people flee Haiti. And those who are lucky enough to flee, and to escape the sharks, and to escape drowning, once they get here are put in jail and treated as criminals.

*Pierre Labossiere is of Haitian origin and lives in Oakland, California. A long-time activist, he has worked for years among church groups and trade unions, building connections with the struggle in Haiti. He is currently a member of the Haiti Action Coalition and the Bay Area Haitian-American Council.*

## Body Count

By Timothy Pershing

**O**CTOBER 25, 1993, LA SALINE. IT IS EARLY Monday morning in this shantytown section of Port-au-Prince. Naked children stumble by, wiping the sleep from their eyes. The shacks and shanties are beautiful in the morning light, the shadows inside are deep, the last vestiges of night harboring late sleepers. The dirt street is filled with a million smells and a million bits of trash, an archaeological record for the future, compacted by a million feet.

The daily body count for October was high even by Haitian standards. It was evident the CIA millions and all that training weren't going to waste. These guys were good. They knew just when a political connection was needed, like bumping off Antoine Izmerly, Aristide's biggest financial backer, or Malary, the minister of justice. Or when a simple John Doe, hands tied, shot in the face and back and dumped on a main road was sufficient. It didn't matter what uniform they wore. Military, police,

*attaché*, business suit—if they were part of the Killer Elite, they were all the same. It became easy to tell them apart from the populace. They were the ones with guns, or unafraid of them.

October 7 had begun a new chapter. On that day, the political group FRAPH, a Neo-Duvalierist party, staged a general strike and enforced it with guns: Uzis and pistols for the civilians-attired *attachés*, M-16s for the military and police. A new twist was the omnipresent walkie-talkie, allowing instant communication and the ability for a few men to cover, efficiently, a wide area. If a shop dared open its doors, within minutes a truckload of armed enforcers would arrive and shut it down.

The next day, FRAPH paraded through the streets, only a few hundred strong, escorted by truckloads of armed police. They carried Haitian and American flags, as well as innumerable pictures of Papa Doc. As they flaunted their control, the people on the street stood by, unable to do a thing. Young men

photos: Timothy Pershing





looked humiliated and turned away, older men walked solemnly by. FRAPH, the 36-year-old Chief of Police Michel François, Lt. Gen. Raoul Cédras, and their wealthy backers weren't done yet. Gunfire ruled the night, and everyone stayed indoors locked tight. The night streets were devoid of traffic, terrifying in their emptiness. The sight of headlights meant possibly the worst; driving, if necessary, was done only at high speeds. Nobody walked. In the morning the bodies were dumped on garbage piles or laid out in the street or in the market place.

October 25 was another typical day. The first body we found lay on the side of the Blvd. Harry Truman, the main road along the port area, less than a half mile from the U.S. Embassy. There was no blood in the dirt, so it was evident he had been dumped there, next to a festering sewer. He lay as if sleeping on a big soft bed, legs splayed, half on his side with his hands in front of his face and tied together with a dirty thin blue rag. He wore no shirt or shoes, just a filthy pair of work pants. He wasn't a handsome man, but he was well built, a laborer most likely. He'd been shot in the face, the area around his mouth a mush of bloody flesh. The dried wound was covered with flies. As I stepped over the body they ascended, a swarm of hundreds, then

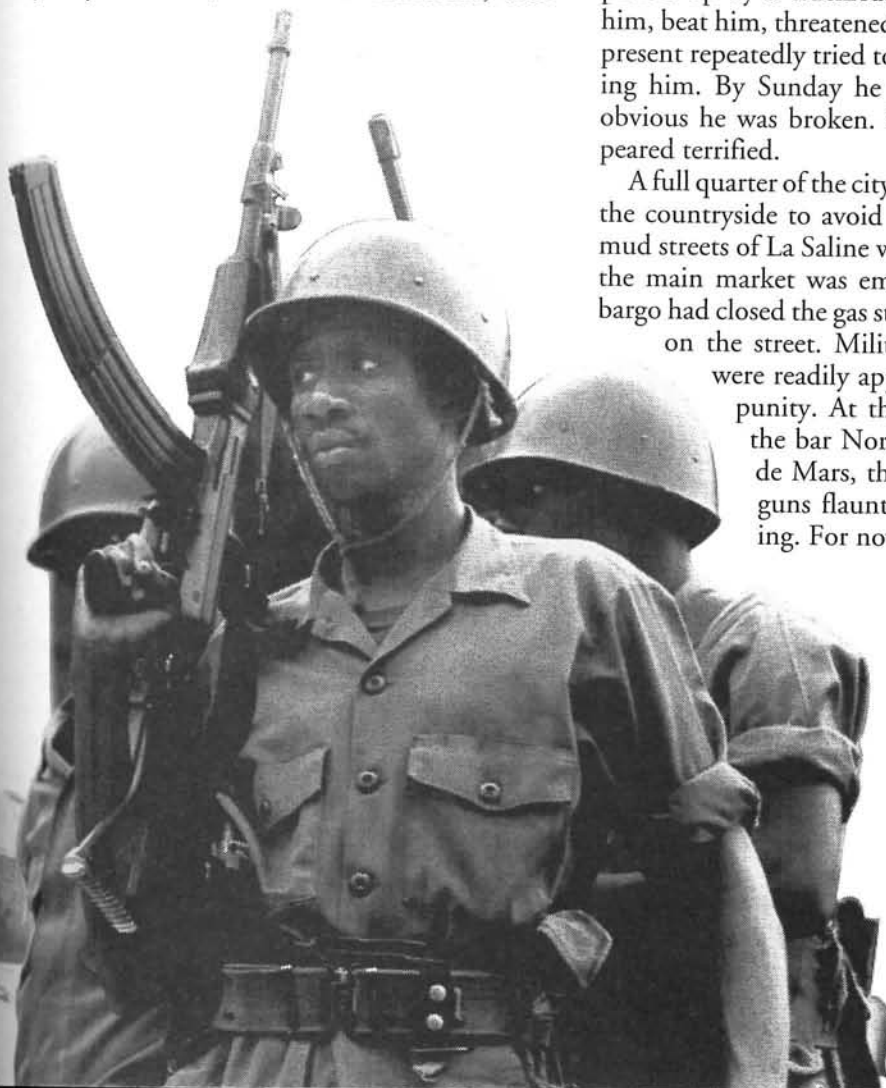
quickly returned to their meal. Another silver dollar-sized hole gaped on his side, smaller entrance wounds dotted his back, facing the sun and well dried. The flies didn't find these spots as appealing. He lay in the dirt, almost peaceful, almost at rest. His eyes didn't reflect the violence of what had happened to him.

The second body was next to the beef market on Dessalines, one of the busiest streets of Port-au-Prince. His head was mangled—it was hard to tell if he was hacked up or shot up. He was laid out on his back, feet slightly apart, hands at his side. He wore a shirt, pants, and shoes. All around, merchants continued to work, trying to ignore the body. When we arrived, a piece of cardboard was lying over his upper body, but as soon as we started taking pictures a man came up and pulled it aside. Within minutes we were hustled on our way by an *attaché*. Rarely is anyone willing to move the body, lest they be associated with it. The body had been there all day.

In the slums of Port-au-Prince live the people from which these messages are extracted, and for whom they are meant. One man, who had been a source over the last few weeks, nearly became a message himself. On the night of October 29 he was picked up by a truckload of *attachés*. They jailed him, beat him, threatened to kill him. Two women present repeatedly tried to talk the men into shooting him. By Sunday he was released, but it was obvious he was broken. For the first time he appeared terrified.

A full quarter of the city's residents had headed to the countryside to avoid the terror, and the dirty mud streets of La Saline were eerily quiet. In town, the main market was empty. The reinstated embargo had closed the gas stations, very few cars were on the street. Military, police, and *attachés* were readily apparent, cruising with impunity. At the FRAPH headquarters, the bar Normandie on Rue Champs de Mars, they gathered to celebrate, guns flaunted, rum and beers flowing. For now, victory was theirs.

*Timothy Pershing is a freelance photographer and artist, working in places as diverse as Bosnia and Uganda. He has traveled through and photographed Haiti annually since 1987. Mr. Pershing resides in Los Angeles where he regularly exhibits his photographs and mixed-media art.*



# Report from Jérémie

by Nancy Laleau

JÉRÉMIE IS A SMALL CITY OF ABOUT 35,000 PEOPLE AT THE TIP OF THE southern peninsula of Haiti. I recently spent a month there as a human rights observer of the National Lawyer's Guild. What has taken place in Jérémie over the last few years is an example of what has happened throughout Haiti.

In 1990, a neighborhood group from St. Hélène's in Jérémie nominated Jean-Bertrand Aristide for president, and the whole country took up their initiative. They then devoted themselves to his campaign, and helped get him elected. Now they are struggling for their lives against Duvalier's henchmen. Although the "Lavalas generation" are in their twenties and thirties, most of them haven't completed high school yet because they have been too busy fighting the series of dictatorships and building community organizations.

In Jérémie, with help from a liberation theology priest and Haiti's only progressive bishop,<sup>1</sup> Monsignor Willy Romelus, these young people established

<sup>1</sup> Haiti's other bishops invited the coup and blessed it. Neither they nor the Pope have denounced the murders of 4,000 civilians. Rather, they have continually attacked President Aristide for preaching "class struggle" and "violence." The Vatican is the only diplomatic entity *in the world* to officially recognize the coup government.



untitled work by Franceska Schiffrin



community cooperative storehouses and bought many basic commodities (cement, rice, flour, oil, sugar) wholesale in Port-au-Prince, selling them at cost throughout their neighborhood, a squatter settlement of about 12,000 people—one-third of the whole city. They set up literacy programs and a neighborhood trade school and trained people in carpentry, masonry, and other skills. They invested in fishing nets, installed piped water to the community and hired a caretaker to maintain the pump, turning it on and off at set hours, to guarantee the community a stable water supply. Instead of begging

in the streets for survival, poor women were given small business loans from a community credit union, where they were coached in marketing techniques. Many thus became empowered and skilled in supporting their children for the first time.

This community, and many others throughout Haiti, developed an unheard of level of expertise in establishing and running community organizations; they wanted a bigger voice in national affairs. With Aristide's election, they had their foot in the door. Aristide began cleaning out the public service sector,

**continued on next page**

## Where Do We Go from Here?

by Max Blanchet

**T**HE SIGNING, ON JULY 3, 1993, OF THE NEW York Governor's Island Accord gave hope that the constitutional government and the Haitian army had reached a resolution to the Haitian crisis. Many had greeted the New York accord with skepticism because it involved a flawed sequence of events: the early removal of the sanctions and the late departure of General Cédras and his cohorts meant that Cédras would be in charge during the crucial period of transition. President Aristide and his advisors had protested this arrangement but agreed to sign the final document when pressured by the combined forces of the UN, the Organization of America States (OAS), and Haiti's four "friends" — Canada, France, the U.S., and Venezuela.

The worst fears of Haiti observers were confirmed when a wave of violence, engineered by the army and its front, FRAPH, swept through the country. The violence culminated in the assassination of Antoine Izmerly, one of the pillars of the popular movement, and Guy Malary, the justice minister in the new government of Prime Minister Robert Malval. The coup de grace was delivered late in October 1993 when thugs under the control of FRAPH prevented U.S. components of the UN/OAS training mission from disembarking in Port-au-Prince.

Since then, the political situation has remained deadlocked. General Cédras is still in charge of the army while Colonel Michel François controls the police and its affiliated network of civilian *attachés* responsible for the climate of terror prevailing in the country. The misapplied and inadequate embargo further compounds the already precarious situation of working people who confront skyrocketing prices as more and more jobs disappear. Prime Minister Malval, who resigned on December 15, 1993, remains as acting prime minister until a new one is selected and ratified by parliament. It is



*"Taking to the Streets (with Dead Child)"  
by Franceska Schiffrin*

difficult, however, to see how the parliament can function, as many of its members are in hiding if not in exile.

The only positive development in recent weeks was the broad-based meeting convened by President Aristide in Miami on January 14-16, 1994. Held in spite of enormous pressures from U.S. officials to cancel it, the meeting drew over 500 people and became a dramatic display of solidarity with the Aristide government and the grassroots resistance inside Haiti. Twenty-seven members of the Haitian Parliament attended, as did members of the Congressional Black Caucus, diplomats from the UN, Canada, France, Venezuela, the OAS and the U.S., and activists from both Haiti and the U.S. Conference participants criticized the Clinton administration for pressuring Aristide to make further concessions to the military in the name of "broadening" his government. They condemned the Clinton policy of forced repatriation of Haitian refugees, leading one State Department official to storm out of the meeting. The Miami conference renewed the confidence of Aristide supporters, as

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replacing people who received "zombie checks" (but did no job) with the energized and idealistic Lavalas generation. You know the rest.

On October 30, 1993, it temporarily came to a grinding halt. In Jérémie, truckloads of soldiers came in the night to seize the managers of the community storehouse, who fled barefoot out their windows and ran all night through cactus-filled ravines and into the mountains. Not finding the people, the soldiers contented themselves with looting the storehouse and their homes. They fired the watchman for the community pump and reduced the water supply. The newly-arrived paving stones that lay on the wharf, destined for St. Hélène's muddy, rutted roads, were stolen and laid in the rich neighborhood on the opposite hill. ("I guess they were too good for us," the young people said ironically, as we drove over that road one day.)

The Lavalas generation "played it by the book"—they didn't resort to armed struggle to get their needs met. They chose a candidate and put him in power through an election that the whole world knows was honest. Even under fierce repression (4,000 dead and over 300,000 in hiding within the country), they have so far not responded with violence, following the wishes of President Aristide, who is also

following "democracy's" rules.

But it seems that some people are more democratic than others. The clear majority (67 percent) chose a president not to the liking of Haiti's America's ruling elites. Bound by their pro-democracy rhetoric, the Clinton administration, like Bush before him, continues to give Aristide and Haiti democracy verbal support while sabotaging his actual return.

The Lavalas generation in Jérémie doesn't sleep at home anymore—they sleep anywhere they can, sometimes with neighbors, sometimes in the woods, sometimes in Port-au-Prince. When army men, in uniform or not, come into the community of St. Hélène, neighbors warn each other, throw rocks on roofs and at the invaders, and drive them out by force of numbers. The army and the state no longer have any credibility or legitimacy whatsoever, not even what they had under the tyranny of Papa Doc.

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*Nancy Laleau, a Berkeley psychotherapist, works with the Bay Area Haitian-American Council; she is available to show slides and speak to community groups. Laleau taught school in Haiti in 1968, and recently returned from a 6-week human rights mission in Haiti.*

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well as their resolve to change the policies of the Clinton administration.

Where do we go from here? The following three scenarios shape the possible outcomes of the crisis.

One involves unilateral American military intervention once again in Haitian affairs. The great majority of Haitians abhor such an alternative because the memories of the misdeeds of the 1915-1934 American occupation are still fresh in their consciousness. The Lavalas government rejects U.S. intervention because it would violate the Haitian Constitution of 1987 and undermine their legitimacy as the protectors of Haitian sovereignty. In any case, many believe that intervention is unlikely due to U.S. domestic preoccupation with the resolution of internal problems.

Another scenario involves the ineffective application of the current sanctions. This would not dislodge the coup leaders, but would bleed the country dry. Aristide would not return as President, and new elections would be held in 1995 under military control. Under the Haitian Constitution, Aristide's term would be over, and he would not be allowed to run again. The result would be a pro-forma democracy, the temporary pushing aside of the Lavalas forces, and the maintenance of military rule. Many in the international community, especially in the U.S., the Dominican

Republic, and the Vatican, probably favor such an outcome as it would not threaten their conservative convictions and interests.

A third and preferred scenario would involve the strict, unambiguous application of the sanctions by the international community, especially the U.N. This might provoke in short order an eruption within the army that would forcibly remove Cédès and François and thus pave the way for the reform of the army with the assistance of the UN and OAS provided in the Governor's Island Accord. The U.N. and OAS would, under this scenario, resume and expand their human rights monitoring mission and help the Lavalas government in its job of economic reconstruction. In addition, the Lavalas movement would give its undivided attention to the creation of a broad political party, one that would have as its pillars the popular organizations, the labor movement, and the nationalistic component of the Haitian bourgeoisie. Only the emergence of such a party can preserve the gains made to date and propel the country on the road to lasting democracy, development, and social justice.

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*Max Blanchet is a Haitian national who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a member of the Bay Area Haitian-American Council.*



Betty LaDuke  
Africa: Healer  
(1989)

# Cry Till Day

## African Women Confront Violence

by Elsa Gebreyesus

**W**HEN KIDISTI CAME EIGHT MONTHS PREGNANT and in pain to the maternity clinic at the main hospital, Mekane Hewet, in Asmara, she told no one at first what had happened. Dr. Madi, an Eritrean gynecologist who had lived and studied abroad, was

hesitant to believe Kidisti's story of her fall, so kept on asking questions about the incident. In the silence and safety of the doctor's office, Kidisti told Dr. Madi of her strict and violent husband, and told him of the night that her husband kicked her in the





*Theresa Musoke  
Market Woman Selling Baskets  
Kenya (1986)*

stomach when she was eight months pregnant.

Dr. Madi, horrified at the thought that the tall, strong woman sitting across from him was living under such violent conditions, talked with her longer, asking her how she lived day after day not knowing when her husband would strike. After a long discussion, Dr. Madi counseled Kidisti never to take her husband's beatings sitting down, and that if ever her husband struck out at her and she had no access to legal protection, that she should strike back. One month later, when Dr. Madi was tending to his usual flow of patients, Kidisti came in escorted by the police, her hands tied behind her back.

Kidisti had never heard anyone tell her that she could strike back, that she didn't have to humbly accept her husband's beatings. She was used to hearing people say that part of a wife's duty was to keep the family together regardless of getting hit, kicked, beaten, or slapped. She was used to all her neighbors at one time or another crying about the violence from their husbands, but they all stayed and lived with the abuse, as they all assumed that being a wife meant bruises and tears. After her talk with Dr. Madi, and after making sure that she and the baby were physically fine, Kidisti went home empowered and determined to fight back.

The next time her husband tried to harm her, she

mustered up all her courage and punched her husband in the mouth, knocking out several of his teeth. For this, she was charged, and, while under custody, taken back to the hospital to give birth. As she passed Dr. Madi in the hospital corridors, Kidisti had a smile on her face, a smile of victory although she still had to deal with the legal repercussions of her "attack" on her husband.

This is a story of one woman who dared to challenge the norm here in Eritrea. Many other women have stories like Kidisti, but the majority of women live their whole lives never knowing that there could be an alternative, never knowing that they do not have to stay in violent and abusive relationships as a duty to their marital vows, that they deserve humane and just treatment from all. Kidisti's life took a different turn; her talk with Dr. Madi gave her the courage and the incentive to fight back.

What happens to the thousands of other Eritrean women whose lives are streaked with violence from birth? Baby girls at the age of one month in the Tigrinya highlands are circumcised, while young Muslim girls between the ages of six to nine in the lowlands of Eritrea are infibulated. Traditionally, the ceremony is performed by the older women of the community, and no special attention is paid to the unsterile conditions and the pain that is inflicted upon these young girls. No attention paid to the fact that hundreds of women die during childbirth due to complications caused by infibulation, no attention paid to the violence committed against all these women.

Where do the hundreds of women go when their boyfriends, husbands, or fathers strike out and hit them? In Eritrea there are no shelters, no place where women can hide or run to. They have to return bruised and beaten to the same place where the violence started. And what do women say when asked about the violence? They reply that it has always been that way, that men will be men and women have to take the pain. Most women expect the violence, expect the pain as part and parcel of their lives.

The men, too, say that women have to be taught and punished if they do something "wrong," like not obeying orders from their husbands, not having dinner ready on time when the husband saunters in from work, or just being there at the wrong time when tempers flare.

## CONVERSATIONS ON ERITREAN CULTURE

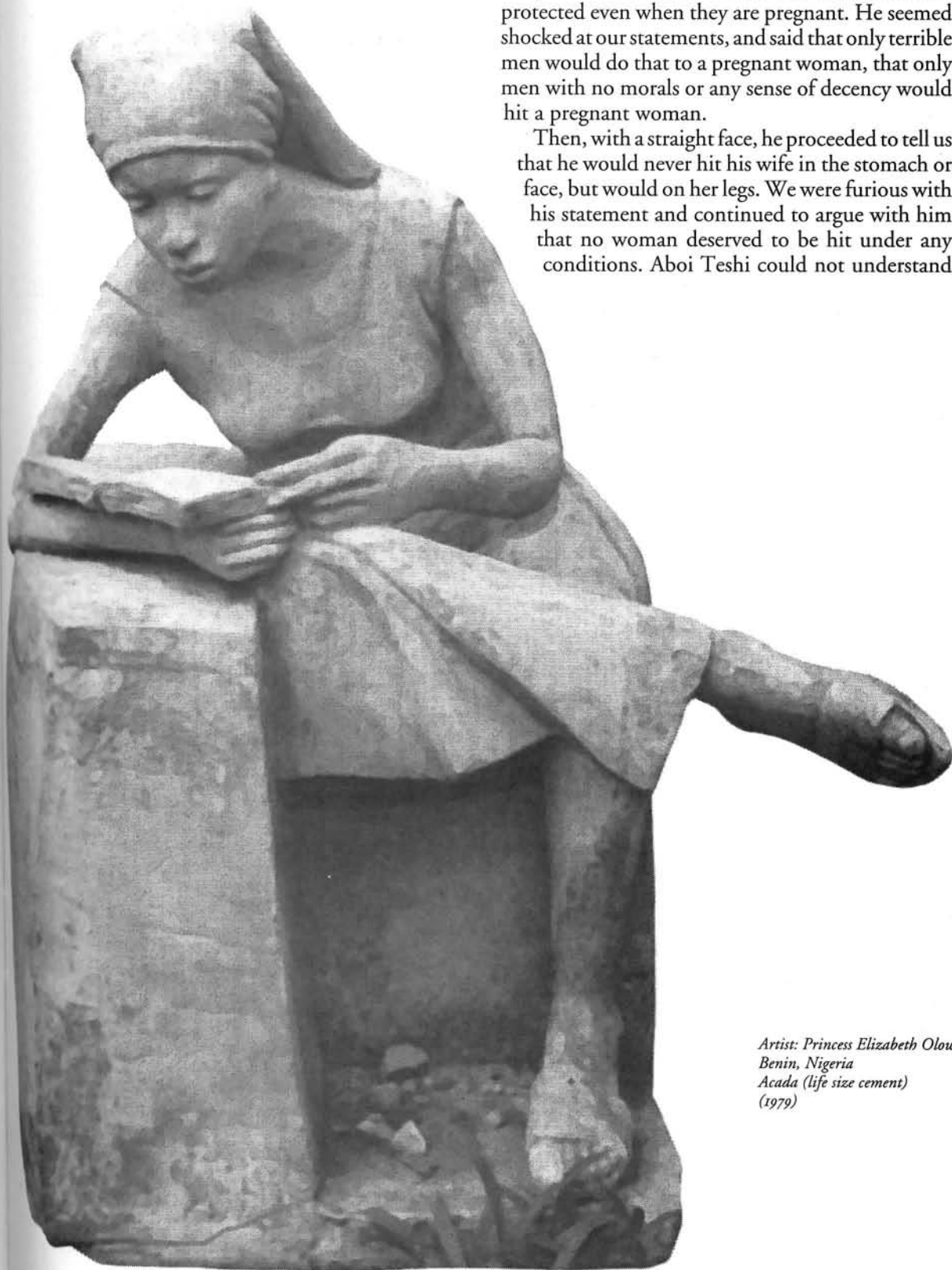
Every so often, when my colleagues and I go for our morning cappuccino at a cafe close by, an elderly gentleman who works there, Aboi Teshi, talks about women in Eritrea. Most of the time his references to women are limited to mothers, homemakers or po-

tential wives, shedding light on how the issue of violence against women is ingrained in Eritrean culture.

One day we decided to challenge his notion that women are created only to bear children, and ex-

plained that women can also have a life of their own as professionals, or anything else they choose. Not really listening to what we were saying, Aboi Teshi kept on saying that women are protected because they are delicate, especially when pregnant. We proceeded to tell him about Kidisti, about all the violence women have to endure in Eritrea and everywhere else in the world, that women are not protected even when they are pregnant. He seemed shocked at our statements, and said that only terrible men would do that to a pregnant woman, that only men with no morals or any sense of decency would hit a pregnant woman.

Then, with a straight face, he proceeded to tell us that he would never hit his wife in the stomach or face, but would on her legs. We were furious with his statement and continued to argue with him that no woman deserved to be hit under any conditions. Aboi Teshi could not understand



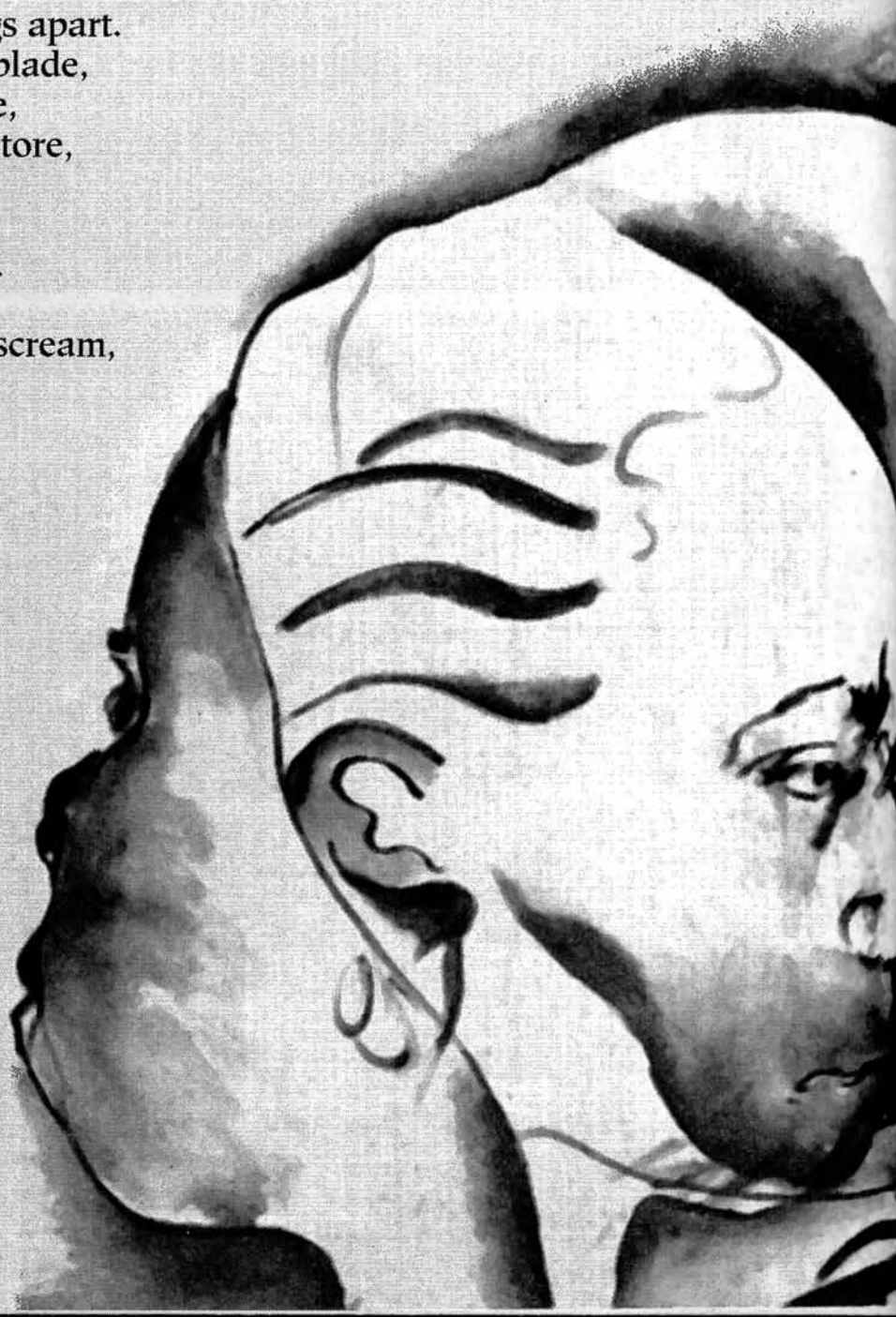
*Artist: Princess Elizabeth Olowu  
Benin, Nigeria  
Acada (life size cement)  
(1979)*

# Malaika

by Elsa Gebreyesus

Upon her beaded hair,  
there sat a gourd of smoothest clay.  
They, wrapped in old, kitenge cloth,  
said, soon would come the day.  
For her black, shy eyes  
would make men start, so  
they made her lie,  
upon her back,  
and spread her tender legs apart.  
They chose the sharpest blade,  
a jagged stone Time made,  
then slashed, ripped and tore,  
her soft,  
centered flesh,  
till bleeding there she lay.

None heard her piercing scream,  
None saw her cry till day.



*Theresa Musoke  
Self Portrait #1  
Kenya (1985)*



our anger and was puzzled for some days as to why we reacted to his observation with such passion. As my colleague and I discussed the incident later, we realized that from his perspective, Aboi Teshi was doing the right thing. He was a product of the culture, and was only reacting to his conditioning. He was taught, like most other men in Eritrea, that, as the head of the family, he had the right to punish his wife or children as he saw fit. That he was entitled to keep his wife in line if she did not do as he said, and that it was his duty to make sure that his wife never had to be told to do something more than once.

The conversation I had with Aboi Teshi made me realize how violence against women is rooted in traditional Eritrean culture. It made me understand that it will take both women and men a long time to break away from the harmful traditional practices, and start working towards holistic, positive, and healthy lifestyles.

### **RECLAIMING FREEDOM: WOMEN IN THE ERITREAN REVOLUTION**

As an overall aim, the struggle to liberate Eritrea from the oppressive and violent Ethiopian regime was about reclaiming the freedom to exercise basic human rights. The progress that women made over the period of 30 years of war as equal claimants to the right of self-determination (women comprised 30 percent of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front) opened the way for women in Eritrea to build upon the gains women fighters achieved in the field.

In 1979, during the war, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) was established in response to the large number of women who became guerrilla fighters. Originally, the organization was established to mobilize women and encourage them to join the struggle. Over the years NUEW was involved in development projects like literacy campaigns, training of traditional birth attendants, leadership training, and even a sanitary towel factory in one of the liberated areas of Eritrea. Women fighters were vanguards of their time as women worked as doctors, mechanics, drivers, and battalion leaders. These women broke away from the traditions that kept women in specific roles as homemakers and mothers. Instead, they opened up a new path for other women to follow and pursue their own aspirations and desires.

Now, after the independence of Eritrea, NUEW works as a non-governmental organization with the overall goal of improving the social, economic, and political conditions for all women in Eritrea. In response to the various issues that affect women in Eritrea like violence against women, we at the Union are involved in forums and other public education campaigns through our ten provincial offices. As the

organization is only now establishing itself in liberated Eritrea, the mandate of the organization is to reach the whole country and not only the liberated areas as in the past.

### **LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER: AFRICAN WOMEN IN DIALOGUE**

Eritrea for a long time was isolated from the rest of the world. Now that there is peace, we believe that women in Eritrea have much to learn from other women in Africa and other parts of the world. Also, women in other parts of Africa can learn from the experiences of Eritrean women. Such exchanges will strengthen the voice of all women.

For the week of February 22-26, 1993, approximately 30 women working in non-governmental organizations from nine different African countries met in Harare, Zimbabwe to discuss the issue of violence against women. The aim of the conference was to network with other women's organizations and to search for strategies to end all forms of violence against women in their own regional areas and communities.

The conference was organized by the Musasa Project, which started in Harare in 1988 to address the issue of violence against women with particular emphasis on domestic violence and sexual harassment in Zimbabwe. The word "M'sasa" in Mashona (one of the indigenous languages of Zimbabwe) is the name of a tree. The shade of this tree is a welcome shelter to weary travelers in Mashonaland, and serves as a refuge from the relentless heat. The word "M'sasa" is also used in reference to temporary shelters built by the indigenous peoples while relocating or moving. The founders of the Musasa Project identified their work as providing shelter to battered women, and thus named the organization after the various meanings of "M'sasa."

The participants of the conference were not only women's organizations from different parts of Africa, but also the local police, the social welfare department, church organizations, lawyers and legal advisors to the Musasa Project. The aim of bringing these different departments and sectors together was to encourage the local community to address the issue of violence against women and to try and find means of working collaboratively to end domestic violence, sexual harassment, and discriminatory practices against women. There was also an emphasis on identifying the injustices in the legal system to find strategies for law reform to ensure the protection of women's rights.

### **FROM CAMEROON TO TANZANIA, AFRICAN WOMEN CONFRONT VIOLENCE**

The Musasa Project is only one of many African women's organizations that have been established in

the recent past to address the issue of violence against women. In Cameroon, a group of five professional women formed the Association de Lutte contre les Violences Faites aux Femmes (ALVF—Association for the Struggle Against Violence Towards Women), a volunteer organization dedicated to ending all forms of violence against women in Cameroon (which includes female genital mutilation, incest, and forced marriages). The women all work in their respective professions, and put in extra time to guide the direction of the organization, which has now flourished into a strong and pro-active lobby group to the government and society at large. ALVF is also involved in conducting research, accumulating information, and serving as a “nerve center” for women survivors of violence who need legal advice, emotional support, and counseling services. They have already held international conferences to address the issue of violence against women, and continue to take concrete steps towards eradicating the structures and institutions that encourage violence against women, be it physical, sexual, or emotional.

For the November 1992 issue of “Sauti Ya Siti,” the Tanzania Media Women’s Association (TAMWA) focused on violence against women. TAMWA decided to print the special issue after a tragic incident when a first-year university student, Levina Mukasa, died from an overdose of chloroquine tablets. An investigation into Levina’s death revealed that she had been a victim of continuous sexual harassment from a group of male university students. These men randomly picked out Levina from among the other female students and plastered her name with vulgar messages on bathroom walls, in the school hallways, and in her dorm. They threatened to do the same to any other woman who befriended Levina. The other female students, not wanting to endure the same embarrassment and abuse, left Levina to walk alone. When no one came to Levina’s aid, and she was left alone to endure the harassment and abuse, Levina took her life. Levina’s death caused an uproar amongst the women’s organizations in Tanzania, who came together and demanded an inquiry into Levina’s death and the administration of the university. They vowed to work together as a lobby group to speak out and find ways to end violence against women in Tanzania.

There are high incidents of rape in South Africa; in one year 18,145 rapes were reported. If only one in 20 rapes are reported, as is estimated, then approximately 1,000 women were raped every day during that particular year. In Yeoville, South Africa, the organization People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) is a feminist political organization that works with women who are survivors of rape, battery, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. POWA also runs a public education program, gives talks, training courses, and operates a resource cen-

ter with a wide range of information on rape and battery. They also run a self-help shelter where women can stay for three months until they establish themselves and find work, accommodations, and child-care services.

### PUTTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA

The statistics of violence against women all across the world are frightening. Only recently has the issue of violence against women made it onto the human rights agenda. The struggle for the issue of violence against women to be included in the fight for human rights among the mandates of the United Nations agencies, activists and governments is proving to be a long and difficult process.

It is a crime against humanity to witness the televised “ethnic cleansing,” mass rape camps, and violence of the military tactics of the Croats against the Bosnian Muslims. In this war, the aim is to completely eliminate a whole ethnic group. The issues of misogyny and racial hatred are glaringly intertwined while the powers of the so-called “New World Order” watch the horror, report the crime, and discuss it on the evening news. And while the governments discuss whether or not they should get involved, thousands of women and young girls are brutally raped, tortured, and killed in the war zone.

How much more violence and hatred do we have to witness in order for things to change? How many more rapes need to be reported in order for people to start to realize that the laws need to change? How many more deaths?

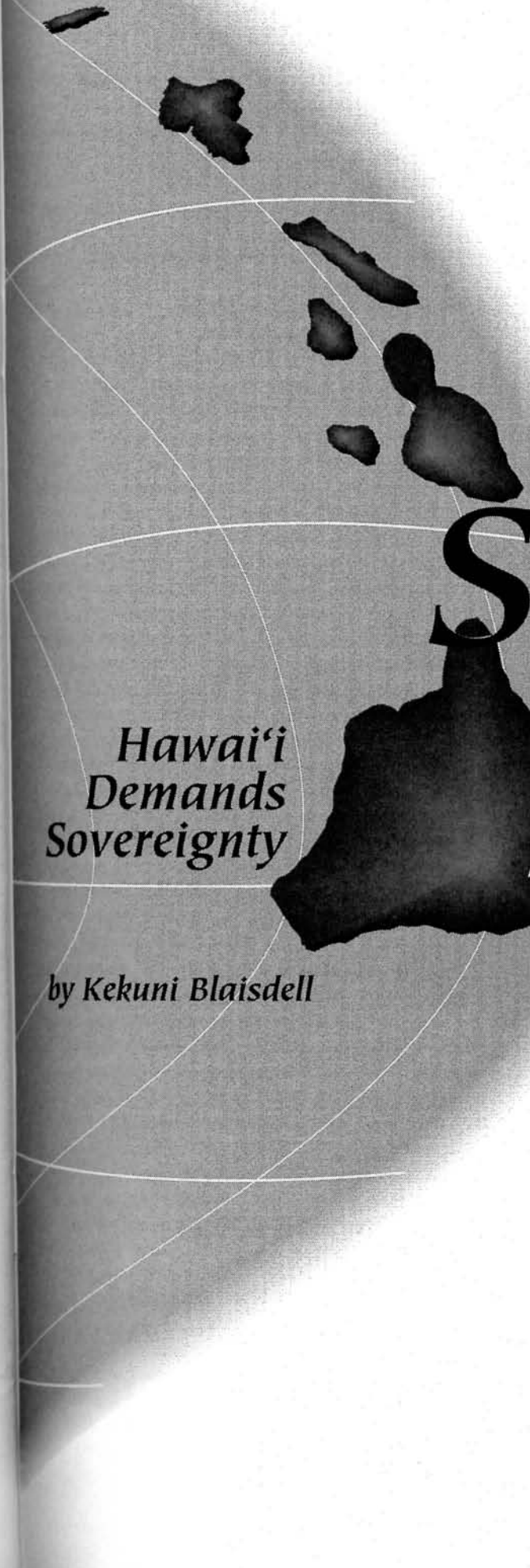
The issue of violence against women has to be addressed and women’s organizations that are taking concrete steps in their own regional areas need to be supported. There are no color lines, no class divisions when it comes to violence against women. As more women’s organizations are constructed to deal specifically with this issue, women finally have a forum where we can bring this to the forefront of the human development process. □

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*Elsa Gebreyesus is an Eritrean, born and raised outside of Eritrea; she has lived in Ethiopia, Kenya, the U.S., and Canada, and now in Eritrea. She has worked as a project officer of the National Union of Eritrean Women since 1992. To respect the privacy of the individuals represented in this article, their real names were not used.*

Donations and material assistance for the National Union of Eritrean Women are welcomed at the following address:

NUEW  
P.O. Box 239  
Asmara, Eritrea



## Hawai'i Demands Sovereignty

by Kekuni Blaisdell

# Stolen Islands

**T**HE YEAR 1993 MARKED THE CENTENNIAL OF THE 1893 U.S. ARMED invasion of Hawai'i. On January 17 more than 12,000 indigenous Hawaiians, or *Kānaka Maoli*, joined a sovereignty rally expressing their outrage at the U.S. armed invasion and the lawless occupation and theft of our government and lands beginning a century earlier.

The current *Kānaka Maoli* independence movement began about 30 years ago in the 1960s, but as early as the 1893 invasion and 1898 annexation of *Ka Pae'āina* (the Hawaiian Archipelago), *Kānaka Maoli* vigorously resisted the takeover. The 1895 indigenous armed revolt against the *haole* (Western) usurpers, however, was squelched, with more than 200 rebels tried for treason and our Queen for misprision of treason. Well aware of the indigenous opposition, the *haole* annexationists would not agree to an island-wide plebiscite on the political status of the islands.

Once annexation was in force under the U.S.-imposed Territory of Hawai'i, the official policy toward us *Kānaka Maoli* was assimilation. Our indigenous language had already been banned in the schools in 1896. Under U.S. *haole* colonial domination, we *Kānaka Maoli* were taught to be ashamed to live the "primitive" ways of our ancestors. We were told that we were fortunate to be Americans first and then, unfortunately, Hawaiians. In earlier years, we learned to be afraid to be *Kānaka*, a term of derision usually associated with adjectives such as "dumb," "lazy," "drunk," and "dirty." Only in certain rural *kīpuka*—isolated pockets of self-reliant *Kānaka Maoli* who were able to remain on, and gain livelihood from, the land and the sea—were remnants of the traditional culture and resistance to foreign domination maintained.



## Testimony from the Tribunal

My name is Puanani Battad Rogers. I belong to a unique race, a unique race among all other races of indigenous people of the earth, our mother. The blood of my Hawaiian ancestors flows through my veins. I am 53 years old, and I was born and grew up in a little town of Kapa'a, Kaua'i.

One of the points on Kaua'i is called the *leina*, the place from which the souls of the dead took their departure into the setting sun. According to tradition, the priests of this temple have uttered the prayers which sped the departing souls upon their way. There is said to be a sacred spring in this cliff behind the *heiau*. That area is a missile launch zone for the Pacific Missile Range Facility or PMRF. And PMRF is only one of many military installations using large parcels of our Hawaiian lands.

— Nani Rogers

Cultural cannibalism is an insidious and hideous part of colonialism, as it is part of the process of assimilation, what I would call a deliberate attempt to eradicate those beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviors, language, religion and practices of a culture that are in contradiction or in conflict with the dominant culture.

The worst example of cultural cannibalism is what is happening at Kilauea volcano in the exploitation of it by the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, which, of course, is a branch of the U.S. government. It begins from the very moment one enters the park, with the payment of fees. We are all required, all of us, whether or not we are Hawaiian, whether or not we are American, whether or not we are human, we are all required to pay these fees.

This is a tax to enter someone else's church, because the Kilauea volcano is considered sacred to those who practice the Pele religion. So this cultural exploitation of another person's religion by requiring you to pay a fee is the grossest example I can think of of the eating, the consumption and commodification of the sacred.

— Lehua Lopez

We have taken the state and the U.S. government to court on the grounds of desecration, of digging up geothermal resources in sacred areas and ignoring the rights of religious practice and respect for the deity called Pele. Geothermal development is drilling into what we thought was sacred geography. Sacred geography is something that Christianity cannot understand. They want "site specific" religion. Our religion starts from the top of the mountain to the sea. We do not have religion as Christians do, right around a church or a shrine. Ours is sacred geography. The resources and the elements that surround these islands are our Gods.

— Palikapu Dedman

The 1959 U.S. imposition of statehood brought an economic boom. Later the U.S. military began to use Hawai'i as a mid-Pacific base for the Vietnam War. When the rural *kīpuka* were besieged in the 1960s and 1970s by commercial, government and military developments, resistance to the establish-

ment, especially by organized *Kānaka Maoli*, became overt. Indigenous people began to claim ownership of their land to protest tourist, military, and government-driven encroachments on island residents. In the 1970s, mostly rural *Kānaka Maoli* affected by the land dislocations joined with university activists to learn of and assert our special legal rights as the indigenous people of *Ka Pae'āina*.

This new empowerment was strengthened by the incorporation of our traditional *Kānaka Maoli* beliefs, language, and practices. These include *aloha 'āina* (love the land), *mālama 'āina* (care for the land), *mālama kai* (care for the sea), and spiritual ceremonies at gatherings.

Land occupations, evictions, jailings, court trials—mostly losses but occasional wins—continued. Numerous taro-roots organizations sprouted. Two causes in the 1970s gained special prominence. The ALOHA (Aboriginal Lands of Hawai'i Ancestry) reparations proposal went all the way to the U.S. Congress in 1973. Then, in 1976, the occupation of the island of Kaho'olawe eventually succeeded in halting the U.S. military's bombing of that island.

From 1978 to 1980, the state of Hawai'i reacted to contain the spreading restlessness. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) was created as an agency of the state to "better the conditions of Native Hawaiians...and to serve as a receptacle for reparations" [from the U.S. government].

In 1984, the first Native Hawaiian Sovereignty Conference convened with two of the five main speakers advocating independence from the U.S. Three years later 250 *Kānaka Maoli* delegates, attending a convention in Hilo, drafted a constitution for *Ka Lāhui*, a separate nation within the U.S. following the American Indian tribal nation model. A turning point came in August 1988. At a reparations hearing conducted by U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye on the University of Hawai'i Manoa campus, a demonstration for "sovereignty, not reparations" attracted the TV news cameras. Caught off-guard, Inouye publicly acknowledged, for the first time, our *Kānaka Maoli* people's right to sovereignty.

Alarmed, state of Hawai'i and U.S. officials began to co-opt the sovereignty movement in order to maintain their control over the ultimate prize—the almost two million acres of our stolen *Kānaka Maoli* lands and the over one billion dollars in annual revenues from their natural resources. Since 1988, the term "sovereignty" has been co-opted by U.S. and state officials, including Senators Inouye and Daniel Akaka, Governor John Waihee, the OHA trustees, and native legislators. Their definition of "sovereignty," however, is continued U.S. and state control of our stolen *Kānaka Maoli* lands.

Three main models of "sovereignty" are now apparent, with multiple minor variations:

(1) A "sovereign Hawaiian nation as a political

subdivision of the state of Hawai'i," with the Hawaiian Home Lands as the land base. This model is promoted, but not yet openly, by the congressional delegation, the governor, the legislature, the OHA, and the State Council on Hawaiian Homestead Associations. All of these parties support the governor-appointed 19-member Sovereignty Advisory Commission, recently created by the state legislature, that will advise on a state plebiscite for a "convention to propose an organic document for governance of a Hawaiian sovereign nation."

(2) A Hawaiian nation within the U.S. as proposed by *Ka Lāhui*. This arrangement would be guided by U.S. policy toward American Indians and Alaskan Natives. It would require petitioning the U.S. Congress. If approved, the U.S. Department of the Interior would oversee the new native government, perhaps through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Presumably the Hawaiian Home Lands and some negotiated "ceded" (stolen) *Kānaka Maoli* lands would constitute the new nation's land base.

(3) A restored independent *Kānaka Maoli* nation, with, eventually, complete withdrawal of the U.S., is favored by *Ka Pakaukau*, the Institute for the Advancement of Hawaiian Affairs and, perhaps, the 'Ōhana Council of the Hawaiian Kingdom. *Ka Pakaukau* proposes a series of negotiated treaties, between the two nations as equals, with incremental progression toward establishing total *Kānaka Maoli* control over our entire *Ka Pae'āina*, as prior to 1893.

All three elements of the sovereignty movement are united by cultural pride, the desire to relieve the painful plight of our people, and control of our land. On the other hand, some aspects of all three of these issues also divide us.

Too many modern *Kānaka Maoli*, like the tourists, have been seduced by the Hawai'i Visitors Bureau to believe that our culture is the Hollywood hula, *hapa-haole* songs, and *lei*-making. We have been so Westernized, Americanized, Christianized and de-*Kānaka Maoli*-ized that most of us are not aware of our ancestors' basic belief—that like all in the cosmos, we *Kānaka Maoli* originate from the mating of *Wākea*, our sky father, with *Papa*, our earth mother. Therefore, all in the cosmos are living, conscious, and communicating siblings. Thus, our spiritual as well as physical and biological attachment to our sacred *'āina*, the environment.

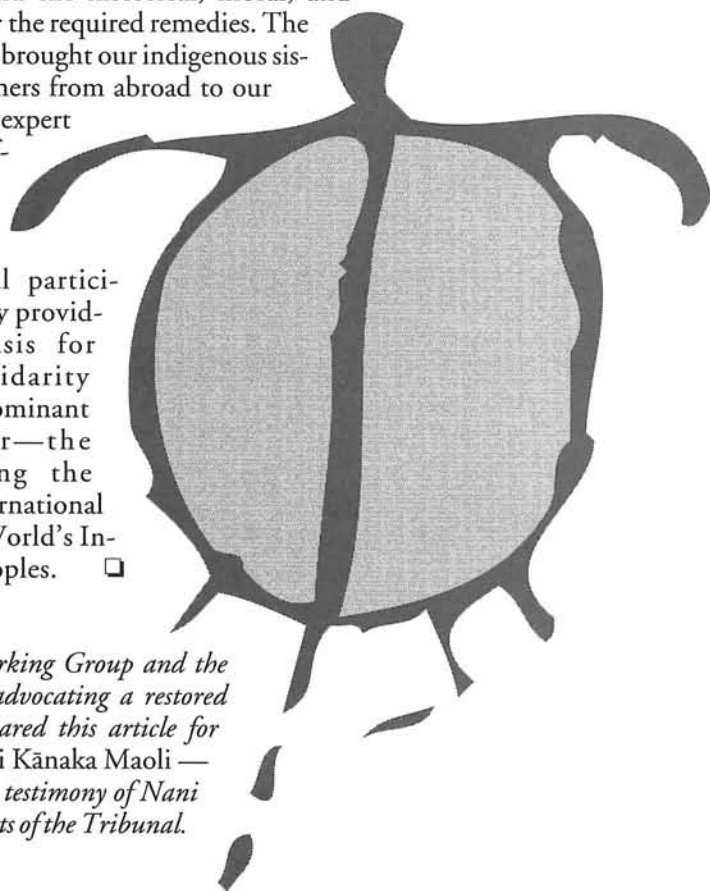
Many *Kānaka Maoli* are still not aware that we natives in our homeland have the worst health,

economic, educational, and social indices of all ethnic peoples in our homeland. Many of our own people are not aware that self-government and land and its resources are the two essentials for nationhood, and that we *Kānaka Maoli* have continued to be denied both by the U.S. since 1893–1898. Because of this deprivation, we, like other exploited indigenous people, continue to decline. The projection is that by the year 2044 there will be no more *piha Kānaka Maoli*, that is, pure indigenous Hawaiians.

Some of us, however, refuse to accept that prediction and are determined to reverse the five main factors responsible for our grim status: (1) depopulation, because of foreign illnesses and displacement from our lands, and *Kānaka Maoli* minority status because of continuing foreign transmigration; (2) foreign economic exploitation; (3) cultural conflict; (4) our too eager adoption of harmful foreign ways, such as the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs and the U.S. high-saturated fat, high-cholesterol, high-salt and low-fiber diet; and (5) neglect and malice by the colonial establishment.

Our commitment to the survival of our endangered people is the basis for the *Kānaka Maoli* movement.

*Ka Ho'okolokolnui Kānaka Maoli*, the People's International Tribunal Hawai'i, which was held August 12–21 in the centennial year of 1993, marking the U.S. invasion of 1893, exposed and documented the long-suppressed truth of the U.S. theft of our nation in the context of international law, and, thus, laid the historical, moral, and legal basis for the required remedies. The Tribunal also brought our indigenous sisters and brothers from abroad to our homeland as expert witnesses, official international observers and cultural participants, thereby providing the basis for further solidarity against the dominant superpower—the U.S.—during the 1993 UN International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. □



*Kekuni Blaisdell is the convenor of the Pro-Hawaiian Sovereignty Working Group and the coordinator of Ka Pakaukau, a Hawaiian sovereignty organization advocating a restored independent Kānaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiian) nation. He prepared this article for Breakthrough immediately before the convening of Ka Ho'okolokolnui Kānaka Maoli — The People's International Tribunal Hawai'i — in August of 1993. The testimony of Nani Rogers, Lehua Lopez and Palikapu Dedman were taken from the transcripts of the Tribunal.*

# GATT: THE GREAT GLOBAL RIP-OFF

*Excerpts from The Uruguay Round and Third World Sovereignty by Martin Khor*



artwork: Lim Jee Yuan, Third World Network

For the last six months—between NAFTA, the North America Free Trade Agreement and GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—the newspapers have been filled with debate about international trade and its impact on the U.S. economy. Yet, for the most part, as exemplified in the Perot-Gore debate, the real impact of “free” trade on developing nations has been absent from the public discourse. Instead the arguments have focused on whether the accords will be better for U.S. workers and the U.S. economy, a discussion framed solely in chauvinistic terms.

In truth, both NAFTA and GATT define a critical moment in the restructuring of the global economy. With the fall of the socialist world, transnational corporations, those based in the U.S. as well as those in Europe and Asia, are relentlessly pursuing new means of strengthening their control over the world economic order.

The popular debates about NAFTA and GATT have defined these international agreements as being about trade in the ordinary sense, i.e., the buying and selling of goods. But the more important, although less discussed, aspects of these agreements had less to do

with how freely raw materials and manufactured goods would flow between nations. The agreements contained provisions never before imposed on the global economy. These included: forcing open the markets of less developed countries to transnational service and financial corporations; giving transnationals a freer hand to invest in these countries without restrictions aimed at preserving the indigenous economies; and extending U.S. and European regulations concerning intellectual property, e.g., patents, into the Third World.

For example, many developing countries and even some countries like Canada have shorter patent lives on pharmaceuticals than do the U.S. and Western European countries. This means that cheaper generic versions of drugs can be produced earlier by national manufacturers. The new terms of trade mean that western pharmaceutical and biotech companies can patent their drugs—often based on plundering the knowledge of indigenous peoples regarding the curative properties of native plants—and sell them back to these countries at inflated prices. The economic impact can be tremendous. NAFTA, for instance, is going to cost Canada \$400 million a



year in increased drug costs.

*This article, highlighting these profound effects on developing countries, contains excerpts from a larger publication entitled The Uruguay Round and Third World Sovereignty, published by the Third World Network. It was written in 1990 at a time when the Uruguay Round—the name for the most recent round of GATT negotiations—seemed about to conclude. In fact, the GATT agreement was not completed until the end of last year and even then there were some critical areas on which the industrialized countries could not agree. But the areas which Khor addresses in his article were included in the final GATT agreement.*

*Martin Khor Kok Peng was formerly a professor of political economy, and is now research director of the Consumer's Association of Penang. He is also vice-president of the Third World Network, the Asian Pacific People's Network and Friends of the Earth, Malaysia. He is the author of numerous articles and*

*several books, including The Malaysian Economy: Structures and Dependence. At present, he is particularly involved in issues related to international trade. He is also managing editor of Third World Resurgence, the monthly magazine of the Third World Network, an international network of groups and individuals involved in efforts to bring about a greater articulation of the needs and rights of peoples in the Third World; a fair distribution of world resources; and forms of development which are ecologically sustainable and fulfill human needs.*

*The Third World Network can be reached at 87 Cantonment Road, 10250 Penang, Malaysia. Subscriptions to Third World Resurgence can be obtained for U.S. subscribers by sending checks payable to Michelle Syverson & Associates, PO Box 680, Manzanita, OR 97130. The annual subscription rate for individuals living in developed countries is U.S.\$20 for surface mail, U.S.\$35 for airmail. Institutions add \$10.*

## Background to the Uruguay Round

**T**RADE REPRESENTATIVES OF INDUSTRIALIZED countries have been attempting a little-known but extremely dangerous assault on the economic sovereignty of Third World countries through the Uruguay Round talks under the auspices of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs. These crucial developments in the Uruguay Round have received scant public attention because the negotiations are conducted behind closed doors and remain hidden from the scrutiny of citizen groups or even from legislatures and governments.

Many Third World governments involved in the negotiations have increasingly expressed unhappiness and frustration at the attempts of the major industrial countries to bulldoze through proposals to drastically alter the rules of international trade and economy. They have been severely hampered by the lack of technical and diplomatic clout and coordination among themselves, but are increasingly taking combined negotiating positions.

The Uruguay Round in particular and GATT\* in general have become by far the most important arena of North-South economic negotiations. The Uruguay Round is scheduled to end in December 1990, so there is an acute urgency for interested parties to take positions to influence the outcome.

The industrialized countries are attempting, through the Round, to extend and tighten their control of the world economy in general as well as over the national economies of Third World countries. They are seeking, in many areas of negotiations, to downgrade or remove entirely the "development principle" which hitherto had been

accepted within GATT rules.

According to this principle, developing countries can be given exemptions or privileges (such as a longer time frame) in complying with certain GATT obligations. This is recognition of the handicap they face being less economically developed compared to the industrial countries, and in appreciation of the special needs they have to build up their long-term development capacity. In other words, the "free trade" promoted by GATT is tempered with the "development principle."

In the current Uruguay Round negotiations, this principle has been more and more eroded and ignored by the major industrial countries which seek that Third World countries be treated no differently from themselves. The industrial countries have also shown less interest in giving concessions in areas which the Third World is interested in, for instance in reducing tariffs on their products or improving the access for its products in the industrial countries' markets.

\*GATT—the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—was set up after WWII along with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It is the major multilateral agreement on trade rules, providing a framework for international trade policy and a forum for trade disputes. Currently over 100 countries have signed the agreement, including the former Soviet bloc countries. Another 30 countries, primarily developing countries, are not formal Contracting Parties, but abide by GATT rules. Until the latest round of negotiations, referred to as the Uruguay Round, GATT had restricted its activity to seeking lower tariffs on traded goods.

Instead the real focus of the industrial countries' Uruguay Round agenda is to radically restructure GATT itself and immensely enlarge its powers so that it can become a "world economic policeman" to enforce new rules that maximize the unimpeded operations of transnational corporations (TNCs). The principle of "free trade" (the absence of state interference, intervention or controls) is being sought by the industrial countries to apply internationally—not only in the traditional GATT area of goods but also now in the area of services and investment flows. Present restrictions or obligations imposed by Third World governments on foreign companies seeking to relate to or set up base in their countries are being portrayed as going against "free trade."

The TNCs want the removal of such barriers to their unimpeded activity, so that they can penetrate

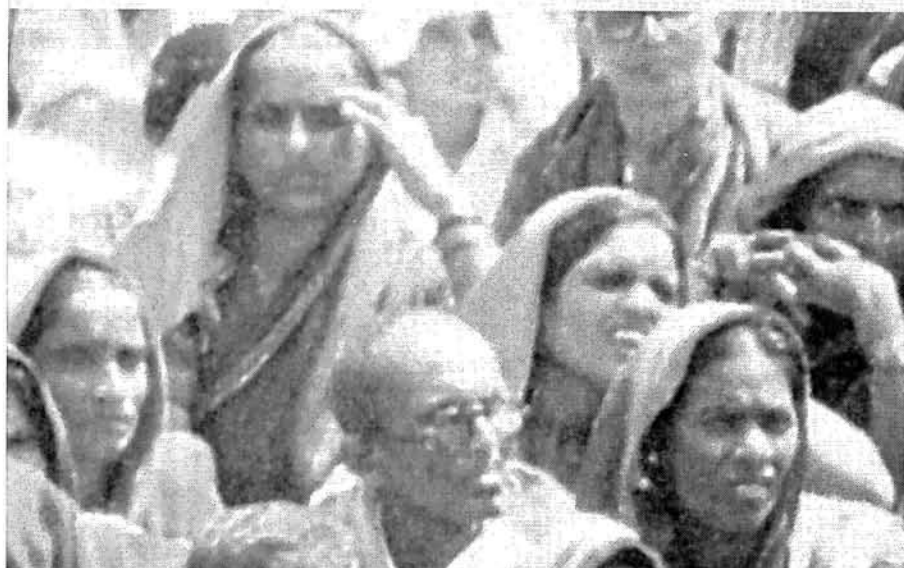
to have their cake and eat it too. They also propose that GATT become the policeman to enforce new regimes on "intellectual property rights" that would oblige Third World countries to have national laws granting patent rights and protection to TNCs for their products and technologies. This will severely hamper the possibility of Third World companies or agencies from developing their own technological capacity, and would grant monopoly power over technology to the TNCs.

In fact, this goes against the principle of "free trade" which the industrial countries are using as an argument to pry open the Third World. This contradiction exposes the double standards that underlie the industrial countries' self-interest in pushing for the adoption of "new themes" or new powers by GATT. They use liberalism or free trade as an intellectual weapon to push for the liberalization of services and investment flows to the Third World; but they simultaneously want to restrict the free flow of technological capacity to the Third World by imposing patent obligations and intellectual property rights regimes on the Third World.

Behind all the pseudo-scientific arguments about free trade is the stark and simple fact that the industrial countries are using the Uruguay Round to enable their TNCs to greatly expand their monopoly powers over all possible areas and levers of the world economy and national economies. Through the incorporation of services and investments into GATT-like regimes, the TNCs will be able to penetrate sectors and areas in the Third World in which presently the locally-owned small- and medium-sized firms (or the family-owned so-called informal sector) predominate. It needs little imagination to foresee that these smaller local economic units will be swallowed up rapidly when the TNCs enter the scene.

And by instituting intellectual property rights laws protecting the monopoly position of TNCs the national companies of the Third World will be prevented from developing their own technologies and thus cannot constitute a future threat to the existing TNCs.

Thus the industrial countries' corporations will expand and extend their monopoly powers in trade and investment in all sectors and in all areas of the world (not only the Third World but now with the collapse of Eastern Europe and the opening up of the U.S.S.R., also the former and many of the present socialist countries), whilst at the same time instituting monopoly rights over technology so as to prevent the emergence or development of possible competitors. The "newly industrializing countries" (like South Korea or Taiwan) will be kept in check while potentially powerful Third World contenders like India, Brazil or China will find it difficult to have an "economic take-off."



October 2, 1993, 500,000 Indian farmers rally against GATT and patenting of seeds.

*photo: Third World Resurgence*

into Third World economies more effectively. As an effective and well organized lobby they have enlisted their governments to make use of the Uruguay Round to extend the "free trade" principle from merely trade in manufactured goods (the present jurisdiction of GATT) to also embrace trade in agricultural goods and to the "new themes" of services, investments and intellectual property rights.

If these new areas are incorporated into the GATT framework in the way proposed by the industrialized countries, then Third World countries will have to "liberalize" or open up their national economies. This will allow TNCs to have sweeping rights not only to export to the Third World, but to invest and set up base in Third World countries, and to be treated like locally-owned companies, with hardly any state controls over them. This "freedom" will be granted not only in manufacturing and agriculture but also in the service sectors (such as banking, insurance, transport, communications, media and professional services).

But the TNCs and the industrial countries want



The result is ever-expanding monopoly powers over ever-extending geographical areas in more and more economic sectors controlled by fewer and fewer mega-companies. The facilitation of this ever-increasing concentration of capital and market power is what is being sought out of the Uruguay Round. The reverse side of this coin is the increasing erosion of Third World countries' control over their national economies to foreign enterprises, and their increasing marginalization in the world economy.

### THE ROLE OF TNCs

The role of the TNCs in influencing the Uruguay Round has become increasingly clear. The U.S. administration, which is the main proponent of the "new themes," has been working closely with U.S. companies. In 1982 the U.S. first expressed the need to apply GATT principles to trade in services. It was motivated by the desire of U.S. service companies to expand their markets and operations and thus to break down barriers, especially in the Third World, that hinder such expansion.

Representatives of TNCs regularly conduct lobbying activities in Geneva during the negotiation periods. The effectiveness and scale of such lobbying became evident in July 1990 during the Group of Seven industrial countries' leaders' summit in Houston where the Uruguay Round figured prominently on the agenda.

In May 1990, leading U.S. companies and business organizations announced the formation of a high-powered "MTN (Multilateral Trade Negotiations) Coalition." Chaired by the former U.S. Trade Representative William Brock, now in private business, the group includes American Express, General Motors, IBM, General Electric, Cargill, Citicorp, Procter & Gamble and other companies; as well as the U.S. Council for International Business, American Business Conference, National Association of Manufacturers, Coalition of Service Industries, International Investment Alliance and Intellectual Property Committee.

The Coalition describes its aims as follows: "The MTN Coalition is a broad alliance of American private sector interests committed to a strengthened and more effective multilateral trading system. The Coalition includes an array of business, farm, consumer and trade associations who have joined with many leading U.S. corporations in an education and mobilization campaign in support of comprehensive multilateral trade agreements in the current negotiating round of GATT.... The MTN Coalition will build public support for Congressional implementing legislation if the agreement is satisfactory."

At the July 1990 Houston Summit the MTN Coalition organized a high-powered press briefing and released a summary report of an "Eminent Persons Group on World Trade," underscoring the links between the two.

Brock said he found it "incredible" that the G7 countries were unable to negotiate seriously, especially on agriculture, while the stakes in the Uruguay Round were so high. He said that while the Summit's focus was on farm reforms, "yet agriculture is not the issue.... Rather it is the linchpin to agreement on *issues of greater magnitude, issues that really matter*, like intellectual property protection, services, investment and subsidies."

This clearly indicates that to the business sector, the new themes were the real agenda in the Uruguay Round. The President of the American Business Conference, Barry Rogstad, said U.S. businessmen saw a strengthened GATT as the "single best way to create an environment to expand their international success."

The business lobby's effectiveness, at least where the U.S. is concerned, was shown by the top priority that U.S. President Bush gave to the Uruguay Round at the G7 Summit. The U.S. Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter stressed that "a successful end to the Uruguay Round negotiations is ten times more important to the U.S. than good relations with the Soviet Union." In the summit's final communique, the G7 leaders described the Uruguay Round as having "the highest priority on the international economic agenda," and they pledged "a high level of personal involvement to exercise the political leadership necessary" to ensure the Round's success.





# *The Uruguay Round as Battleground: National Sovereignty vs. TNC World Power*

**T**HE URUGUAY ROUND OUTCOME WILL HAVE profound implications for the future of the world economy and the global environment, for power relations between countries, and for the sovereignty and pattern of development in the Third World.

At present, the stakes are still heavily stacked against the Third World as the industrial countries are well organized and are basically in control of the levers and processes of the negotiations. At the week-long session of negotiations at Geneva at the end of July 1990, the Third World delegations were acutely frustrated by the unwillingness of the industrial countries to carry on any substantive discussions because they had not yet sorted out disagreements among themselves.

At the end of the sessions, the Brazilian ambassador Rubens Ricupero issued a statement on behalf of Third World delegations, concluding as follows: "Developing countries wish to reaffirm their readiness to negotiate constructively...(but) will reject any attempt to impose upon them a pre-negotiated package agreed only by a few. It is with profound concern that developing countries find themselves compelled to declare that, if the current situation is not changed soon, the Uruguay Round will be in serious jeopardy as a result of the lack of political will of the major participants."

What is at stake is even greater than the sovereignty of the Third World alone. The Uruguay Round will affect the balance of power and participation within every country. The Round is an attempt by transnational companies to establish sets of international laws that would grant them unprecedented unfettered freedoms and rights to operate at will and without fear of new competitors almost anywhere in the world.

If the proposals of the industrial countries were to win the day, then governments signing on to the Uruguay Round agreements would cede a large part of their countries' sovereign right to regulate their own economies, environment, health and even culture. This right will be ceded to the companies which will be granted freedom from interference or intervention by nation states.

National laws of all signatory countries would have to be altered to make them consistent with the international GATT agreements. These laws may be in areas as diverse as finance, equity ownership, services, intellectual property, environment, health, culture and media.

The legislatures of these countries are not ad-

equately aware (many are not even aware at all) that many of the important national laws they had passed could soon be superseded by international agreements which their countries' diplomats and trade representatives are now negotiating.

Worse still, many governments (especially in the Third World) do not realize the full import of what their representatives are negotiating. Many Third World countries have only weak delegations at the United Nations in Geneva and they have to cover not only GATT but other agencies such as WHO and ILO.

Very few of them are able to follow the complex negotiations taking place in the many committees and issues of the Uruguay Round, let alone make meaningful representations. Both at the negotiating center in Geneva as well as in the capital cities, governments, legislatures, interest groups and citizen groups are not able to recognize the full implications of the Uruguay Round.

There are now two major but contradictory trends in the world. On one hand we have the "Green Wave," a rapidly increasing realization amongst both the public and governments that unchecked and uncontrolled operations of companies and the economy are leading to catastrophic environmental and health effects.

Toxic chemicals and products, toxic wastes, nuclear power, industrial pollution, acid rain, deforestation, wasteful energy use, increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the Greenhouse Effect and ozone depletion are the result of too much freedom given to economic forces, especially the big companies. As a result of growing ecological and health consciousness, there is a growing trend of legislatures and governments acting to control the operations and the negative effects of companies, of economic projects, and industrial plants.

The trend extends beyond national boundaries: there is realization of the need for regional and international cooperation and agreements on the international trade in hazardous products and wastes, on global deforestation, climatic change, ozone layer depletion and the Greenhouse Effect. There is increasing awareness of unethical corporate practices and corporate crime (including insider trading, financial fraud, the falsification of safety test results, the knowing sale of toxic products and the illegal dumping of wastes) and the need to tighten regulations and controls to prevent such corporate practices.

For the past two decades at least, Third World countries have also been attempting to improve their

position vis-a-vis transnational companies through the (so far unsuccessful) negotiations at UNCTAD and other fora for codes of conduct on transnational corporation behavior, and for reforming existing intellectual property laws in favor of Third World interests.

The Third World has also tried to stabilize its commodity export position and terms of trade through commodity agreements and schemes, but these efforts suffered a major setback when the industrial countries pulled out of most of the schemes in the second half of the 1980s.

As against the "Green Wave" (which calls for more effective regulation to monitor and check the behavior of companies) there has emerged a powerful contrary trend which advocates the granting of untrammelled and unchecked freedom for "market forces" to dominate economic and other spheres of life.

Under the banner of "free market," "free trade," "deregulation," "privatization" and "liberalization," this trend or ideology calls for maximizing the freedoms and resources to be given to companies to operate, whilst minimizing the role of governments either to participate in economic activity or to regulate the behavior and effects of the companies.

The companies' battle for the "free market," "deregulation" and "privatization" started at the national level, and having been relatively successful they are now attempting to extend it to the international level by using the concept of "free trade."

The chosen arena for this ambitious project is precisely GATT and the vehicle is, of course, the Uruguay Round. If the industrial countries' proposals, especially for the "new themes," succeed, then almost the whole world's market will be open to the TNCs for investments and services besides the traditional area of goods; and moreover, the companies' monopoly over technology and production processes would be ensured.

It is thus no wonder that the "MTN Coalition" of big business and the U.S. administration consider the new themes in the Uruguay Round to be of maximum priority; to the extent that a "successful conclusion" of the Round would be considered "ten times more important than good relations with the Soviet Union."

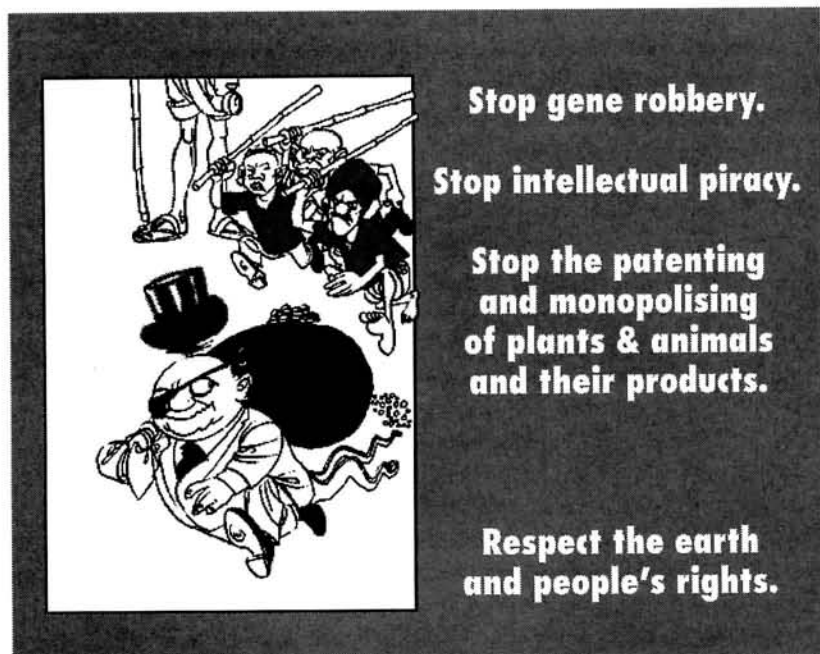
For the Third World (as well as those who care about the environment, health and culture), "free trade" or "liberalization" cannot be taken as a good or goal in itself. Free trade is not necessarily a good thing, contrary to what the industrial countries' ideologues and trade representatives would have everyone believe.

Between two equal partners or contenders, free trade may bring mutually satisfying, fair and equitable benefits. But if one party is far stronger than the other, the benefits are likely to be unequally shared;

indeed the weak party may not gain at all but instead suffer losses.

In the case of international trade in goods, services and investments, it could well be that in the context of liberalization and "free trade," the TNCs will take over control of many sectors and areas of the national economies of the Third World whilst the locally-owned industries, trades and services of the Third World would be increasingly marginalized and prevented from developing.

In an analogy from sports, putting the Third World and the industrial countries on equal footing



in "free trade" would be like pitting a malnourished African child against a Carl Lewis in a 100-meter race. The rules are the same for both: they can start only when the gun is fired, they both have to run 100 meters, and the first person to breast the tape wins. This would be a "free" race in that the rules are similar for every participant but it certainly would not be considered a "fair" race since the contenders are not of equal capacity to begin with.

Similarly, to insist that Third World and industrial countries alike be subjected to the same rules (no tariffs, no national laws hindering foreign investments in goods or services, same patent laws) might be defined as "free trade" but would not constitute "fair trade."

What the Third World should be fighting for is fair trade, not free trade. What it desperately needs is an international economic order that recognizes and caters to its development needs—the need to produce to satisfy the basic and human requirements of its people, the need for greater social equity, and ecologically harmonious forms of development.

For such an economic order to evolve, the North  
see GATT, page 58

Poster of the  
Karnataka  
Farmer's  
Association  
in India  
attacking seeds  
patenting.





# message from Chiapas

documents from the

Zapatista National Liberation Army

(EZLN)

*On January 1, 1994, the uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas by the Zapatista National Liberation Front (EZLN) shook the complacency of the ruling PRI government, as well as that of the Clinton Administration, which had just signed the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico. The press immediately took up the PRI-U.S. line, denouncing the rebellion as the work of outsiders from Central America, linking it to Catholic liberation theologians, and under-reporting both the scope of the armed struggle and the ferocity of the Mexican army repression.*

*In the documents reprinted here, the EZLN articulates its vision for a new Mexico, based on principles which go back to the peasant leader of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata, from whom the EZLN takes its name. The two articles, reprinted in translation, are taken from the first issue of the EZLN newspaper, El Despertador Mexicano, published in December 1993.*



## EDITORIAL

**M**EXICANS, WORKERS, PEASANTS, STUDENTS, honest professionals, chicanos, and progressives of other countries: We have begun the struggle which is necessary to meet the demands that never have been satisfied by the Mexican State: work, land, shelter, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace.

For hundreds of years we have been asking for and believing in promises that were never kept. We were always told to be patient and to wait for better times. They told us to be prudent, that the future would be different. But we see now that this isn't true, everything is the same or worse now than when our grandparents and parents lived. Our people are still dying from hunger and curable diseases, and live with ignorance, illiteracy and lack of culture. And we realize that if we don't fight, our children can expect the same. And it is not fair.

Necessity brought us together and we said "Enough!" We no longer have the time or will to wait for others to solve our problems. We have organized ourselves and we have decided to demand what is ours in the same way that the finest sons of the Mexican people have done throughout our history.

We have entered combat against the federal army and other repressive forces: there are millions of us

Mexicans willing to live for the country or die for freedom in this war. This war is necessary for all the poor, exploited and miserable people of Mexico and we will not stop until we achieve our goals.

We call on everyone to join our movement. Our enemies, the rich and the State are cruel and merciless and there is no limit to their bloody instinct to destroy us.

What's needed is to struggle on all fronts. Your sympathy, your solidarity, the dissemination that you give our cause—all of you who have taken up our cause, that have joined the revolution and are helping to advance our peoples—these are vital to our ultimate victory.

*El Despertador Mexicano* is the newspaper of the Zapatista National Liberation Army. It strives to inform the people about the development of the just war that we have declared against our class enemies.

In this first issue we present our Declaration of War against the Federal Army and we publish the orders to be followed by the leaders and officers of the EZLN in our advance through national territory. Also in this issue are the revolutionary laws that will be enacted in the liberated territories in order to guarantee their revolutionary control and strengthen the bases so we can begin the process of building a new Mexico.

To live for our country or die for freedom!

## AGRARIAN LAW

**T**HE POOR PEASANTS' STRUGGLE IN MEXICO demands the return of the land to those who work it, and in the tradition of Emiliano Zapata and in opposition to the reforms to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, the EZLN again takes up the just struggle of rural Mexico for land and freedom. With the object of standardizing the new agrarian distribution enacted by the revolution throughout Mexican territory, the following Revolutionary Agrarian Law is issued:

**First:** This law is valid in all Mexican territory and benefits all poor peasants and Mexican agricultural laborers regardless of their political affiliation, religious creed, sex, race, or color.

**Second:** This law affects all agricultural properties and agro/livestock businesses inside of Mexican territory, whether they are national or foreign-owned.

**Third:** All poor quality land in excess of 100 hectares and all good quality land in excess of 50 hectares will be subject to the revolutionary agricultural law. The landowners whose lands exceed the aforementioned limits will have the excess taken away from them and they will be left with the

minimum permitted by this law. They may remain as small landholders or join the cooperative peasant's movement, peasant societies, or communal lands.

**Fourth:** Communally-held land and the land of popular cooperatives will not be subject to agrarian reform, even though they exceed the limits mentioned in the third article of this law.

**Fifth:** The lands affected by this agrarian law will be distributed to the landless peasants and the agricultural laborers who thus request it as collective property for the formation of cooperatives, peasant societies or agricultural production/livestock collectives. The affected lands should be worked collectively.

**Sixth:** The collectives of poor landless peasants and agricultural laborers, men, women, and children without land title or who have land of poor quality will have the right to be the first to request land.

**Seventh:** In order to better cultivate the land for the benefit of the poor peasants and the agricultural laborers, the expropriation of large estates and agro/livestock monopolies will include the expropriation of means of production such as machinery, fertilizer,

stores, financial resources, chemical products, and technical expertise. All of these means should pass into the hands of the poor peasants and agricultural laborers with special attention given to groups organized in cooperatives, collectives and societies.

**Eighth:** The groups that benefit from this agrarian law should dedicate themselves to the collective production of necessary foodstuffs for the Mexican people: corn, beans, rice, vegetables and fruit, as well as to the raising of cattle, bees, pigs and horses and to the production of animal-derived products (meat, milk, eggs, etc.)

**Ninth:** In time of war, a portion of the products of the lands affected by this law will be designated for the sustenance of orphans and widows of revolutionary combatants and to the support of the revolutionary forces.

**Tenth:** The purpose of collective production is primarily to satisfy the people's needs, to instill in those who benefit from this law a consciousness of collective work and benefit and to create production, defense and mutual aid units in the Mexican countryside. When a region doesn't produce some product, it will trade justly and equally with another region where it is produced. Excess production can be exported to other countries if there is no national demand for the product.

**Eleventh:** Large agricultural businesses will be expropriated and passed to the hands of the Mexican people, and will be administered collectively by the workers of those businesses. The cultivation machinery, seeds, etc. that are sitting idle in factories and businesses will be distributed amongst rural collectives with the objective of making the land fertile and ending the hunger of the people.

**Twelfth:** Individual hoarding of land and the means of production will not be permitted.

**Thirteenth:** Zones of virgin jungle and forest will be pre-

served; there will be reforestation campaigns in the principal zones.

**Fourteenth:** The riverheads, rivers, lakes and oceans are the collective property of the Mexican people and they will be cared for by not polluting them and by punishing their misuse.

**Fifteenth:** In order to benefit the poor landless peasants and agricultural workers, in addition to the agrarian distribution established by this law, commercial centers will be created to buy the peasants' products at a fair price and to sell them goods at a fair price that the peasant needs for a dignified life. Also, community health centers will be created with every benefit of modern medicine, with capable and conscientious doctors and nurses and with free medical care for the people. Recreation centers will be created for the peasants and their families so that they may rest in dignity without the need of bars or bordellos. Educational centers and free schools will be created where the peasants and their families can receive an education regardless of their age, gender, race or political affiliation and where they can learn the techniques necessary for their development. Housing and road construction centers will be established with engineers, architects, and the necessary materials for the peasant's dignified housing and the construction of good roads for transportation. Service centers will be created in order to guarantee potable water, drainage, electricity, radio and television, in addition to everything necessary for housework: stoves, refrigerators, lavatories, mills, etc.

**Sixteenth:** The peasants that work collectively will not be taxed. Nor will the *ejidos*, cooperatives or communal lands be taxed. From the moment that this revolutionary agrarian law is implemented all debts—whether from credit, taxes, or loans—owed by the poor peasants or agricultural workers to the oppressive government, to foreigners or to capitalists will be abolished. □

## GATT, from page 55

must recognize that it owes a great historical debt to the South for the centuries of exploitation and transfer of resources (human, financial and natural) that have left the Third World so far behind economically that it cannot compete on equal terms.

That is why Third World countries consider "the development principle" such a crucial concept to adhere to at the Uruguay Round negotiations, as this is almost like a code that recognizes that being in a weaker position (due to historical reasons) the countries of the South are entitled to exemptions and privileges in GATT obligations, and that they are entitled to consider their development needs as top priority when negotiating the terms of agreement in various areas of the Round.

Unfortunately even this "development principle," which has till now been accepted within the GATT framework, is under full-scale attack by the industrial countries in the Uruguay Round. If this assault succeeds, the Third World will have almost nothing left with which to defend itself in the vicious terrain of the international economic arena.

The Uruguay Round can be seen as the TNC Empire's grand way of Striking Back at the Green Wave and at the Third

World's emerging demands for global economic justice (as epitomized by the calls for a new international economic order). The first trend (advocating governmental and inter-governmental urgent interventions to save the world's environment through greater controls over companies; and advocating a fair deal for the Third World in a more equitable world economic order) is now clashing head-on with the second trend (which is vigorously pushing for liberalization on a global scale with the removal of controls over TNC behavior).

With the present balance of forces, the advocates of the liberalization trend appear far more powerful and they may succeed in pulling off a virtual coup through the Uruguay Round, going over the heads of national legislatures to secure greater freedoms and powers for themselves in international laws. On the other hand the advocates for a future that is environmentally sound and that allocates a fair share of global resources to the Third World have a cause that has far more attraction and staying power.

How the battle of the trends is resolved may well determine the shape not only of the world economy but the world for many decades to come. □

## ERITREA, from page 9

a constitution that will lead to multi-party elections. The EPLF has said, since the war's end in 1991, that it will dissolve, the task of a liberation front having ended. It will, certainly, transform into one or more political parties. But the EPLF is the government now, and will be for the next several, crucial years. There is every reason to expect that it is a government that will protect the interests of its people, despite a world economy that pressures poor countries to provide *carte blanche* for exploiters; that it will organize development based on indigenous models, advance the interests of women, preserve ethnic culture while building national identity, foster tolerance and equality among Christians and Muslims and highlanders and lowlanders, bring the scattered Eritreans home, and provide political leadership in the Horn of Africa.

### CELEBRATION

On Tuesday, April 27, people were saying that election results might be announced that afternoon. In the morning we drove out to Nefasit and Ghinda. We wanted to talk to people and take pictures of the celebrations we'd heard were going on in all the villages. Nefasit was dreary, literally falling off the bare, muddy hills its stone houses hug—people were digging their huts out of the mudslides that a heavy rain had brought the night before. But Ghinda was all smiles and celebration. We were ushered into a courtyard where women were cooking for the festivities, producing huge stacks of *injera* from a steamer trunk full of batter and a single *magogo*, the round charcoal-fired baking griddle, and cutting and cooking meat and vegetables. A party atmosphere prevailed, with enormous enameled cups of *sewa*, homemade beer, close at hand. We were treated to the resulting delicious stew, and tiny cups of sweet black coffee. At the same time, down the road, contingents of men and women were drumming, clapping, singing, and chanting. When we joined them, about 200 Tigre women, in bright yellows, purples, and pastels, were crowding and dancing into the road under strings of EPLF and Eritrean flags.

Back in Asmara, about 3:00 p.m., Dr. Amare Teclé, the head of the Referendum Commission, in a hastily called press conference at the Ambassoira Hotel, announced that 1,516,280 Eritreans had voted and 99.805 percent of them had voted yes—99.8 percent!

Much of what followed we heard in snatches, from the summary translations of Eritreans clustered around radios in the street, in hotels, in a few offices where people gathered to share the news. Italy immediately extended recognition, followed by the U.S.A., Ethiopia, and Sudan. The first speech broad-

cast came from the Ethiopian representative and was an important symbol of Meles Zenawi's government's unequivocal endorsement of Eritrean independence.

As dusk fell, crowds surged into the streets. The music and drumming started up again. For us that night was bittersweet, as we ran into friend after friend to hug, congratulate, and bid farewell—in a few days we would be leaving Eritrea and the rare company of people who face a daunting future with brave and joyous hearts. So our joy was mixed with sadness. But soon we didn't care. We were dancing. □

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Government of Eritrea publications, including a monthly newsletter, are available from the Embassy of Eritrea, P.O. Box 65685, Washington, DC 20035.

The Eritrean Relief Committee sponsors material aid projects in the U.S. Contact ERC at 1325 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005.

Thomas Keneally, author of *Schindler's List*, novelized the EPLF in *To Asmara* (Warner Books, 1989).

The following books are published by the Red Sea Press, 13 Industry Court, Trenton, NJ 08638:

- Dan Connell, *Against All Odds: A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution* (1993). Connell has witnessed and reported on the Eritrean independence struggle since 1976.
- Abeba Tesfagiorgis, *A Painful Season & a Stubborn Hope: The Odyssey of an Eritrean Mother* (1992). A moving personal account of repression and imprisonment in Asmara during the Ethiopian occupation.
- Robert Papstein, *Eritrea: Revolution at Dusk* (1991). Eyewitness report and 175 striking black and white photos of the EPLF and Eritrea's liberated villages and farms.
- Amrit Wilson, *The Challenge Road: Women and the Eritrean Revolution* (1991). Interviews and analysis recount women's emergence from feudal patriarchy and their role in the armed struggle.
- Roy Pateman, *Eritrea: Even the Stones are Burning* (1990). Comprehensive analysis of the history and politics of Eritrean struggles from ancient times to the eve of independence.
- James Firebrace & Stuart Holland, *Never Kneel Down: Drought, Development and Liberation in Eritrea* (1985). Detailed account of the EPLF's popular revolutionary programs.



# AIDS in the World

*AIDS in the World, A Global Report.* Edited by Jonathan Mann, Daniel J.M. Tarantola, and Thomas W. Netter (Harvard University Press, 1992) \$19.95 paperback



AIDS patient,  
Curicica Hospital,  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

photo: J.R. Ripper/Impact Visuals

Reviewed by David Gilbert

**A**S TERRIBLE AS THE AIDS PLAGUE AND THE inadequacy of the response have been in the U.S., the situation is excruciatingly worse in the Third World. Several African countries have astronomically high rates of HIV (the AIDS virus) infection, on top of wrecked economies and decimated public health systems. And the debilitation and death of so many citizens in their prime productive years will in turn further cripple the efforts for development. In the West, an eerie silence prevails about this incalculable human toll and social devastation.

Jonathan Mann, the former director of the World Health Organization Global Programme on AIDS and currently a professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, and his two colleagues, Daniel J.M. Tarantola and Thomas W. Netter, have performed an invaluable service in drawing together a global overview of the AIDS pandemic. (The word "pandemic" is used to mean everywhere because

AIDS is now present in 164 countries, on all inhabited continents and in the Pacific Islands.) They open their inquiry with a stark question: "Is the pandemic now out of control?" Their main conclusion, 841 pages later: "The pace of the pandemic is fast outgrowing the pace of the response, and the gap is widening rapidly and dangerously."

It is not a simple matter to chart even the current scope of the pandemic, let alone to project its future course. Official figures for AIDS are notoriously low because many cases are never reported. The much larger number of people with HIV (most of whom won't be visibly sick) can only be estimated from fragmentary blood sampling of various populations. A prognosis entails taking this imperfect data and then assessing the likely rate of progression. *AIDS in the World (AIW)* contains a very thorough, careful, and reasonable compilation of the data and future projections. The editors provide an appendix that explains the basis for their model, which was devel-

oped between 1988 and 1990. Actual surveys from 1991–1992 show that *AIW*'s projections were conservative.

By early 1992, 12.9 million persons cumulatively worldwide had become infected with HIV, of whom 2.7 million had developed AIDS, of whom 2.5 million had subsequently died. Sub-Saharan Africa, with 10 percent of the world's population, has 68 percent of the total HIV infections (8.8 million persons), and 72.8 percent of the AIDS cases (1.9 million persons). Pregnant women provide a good indication of the overall adult infection rate. In the capital cities (the problem is worst in urban areas) of Uganda, Zambia, and Malawi, 20 percent of the pregnant women are HIV positive. *AIW* also cites a study indicating a nationwide infection rate of 5 percent in Uganda (other studies have revealed even higher estimates). Already, some 1.3 million African children have been orphaned by AIDS. Many areas of Africa don't even have the means to consistently screen blood, which means that HIV is still being transmitted through blood transfusions, and very few medicines or social services are available for persons with AIDS.

By 1995, there will be 6.4 million cumulative cases of AIDS worldwide; that is to say that the new cases from 1992–1995 will outstrip the entire previous history of this plague. Eighty-four percent of these cases will occur in the Third World. Africa will have suffered 4.6 million cases of AIDS, eight times the U.S. total.

Without dramatic changes to stanch the pandemic, we can expect cumulative totals by the year 2000 of up to 110 million HIV infections, 25 million AIDS cases, and 20 million deaths worldwide. Something like ten million orphaned children will exist in Africa alone. Currently, the U.S. is spending an inadequate \$2.75 per capita on prevention efforts. For sub-Saharan Africa the figure is seven cents; for Latin America, three cents. For some of the African countries hit hardest by AIDS, their entire national health budget is equal only to that of a large hospital in the U.S.

*AIW*'s great contribution is in providing this statistical overview with all too rare attention to the Third World. They then go on, with a collection of essays by various experts, to try to provide a comprehensive report on all aspects of the worldwide AIDS crisis. In this respect, their efforts are uneven, and the studies tend to be broad and general rather than trenchant and critical. They would have served us better with a shorter, more focused work on prevalence, prevention, and public health in the Third World. Perhaps their promised future yearly editions will do so.

Nonetheless, *AIW* contains a number of particularly valuable points that are worth underscoring. One is AIDS' mutually reinforcing relationship

(synergy) with other diseases, particularly tuberculosis (TB) and certain sexually transmitted infections like syphilis. TB, although long considered under control in the industrialized world, is the leading infectious killer worldwide. One third of the world's population (1.7 billion people) carry the TB bacterium, but most healthy persons keep it in check and it just lies dormant. With AIDS, and the breakdown of the immune system, many more persons are progressing to active TB, and they in turn can transmit this airborne bacterium to others. Right now an estimated 4.6 million persons worldwide carry both the TB and HIV infections. In sub-Saharan Africa, active TB cases have doubled over the past five years. Also, new drug-resistant strains of TB have been found in the U.S. Synergy also occurs with various sexually transmitted infections because they leave people much more vulnerable to catching HIV; yet many of these 250 million new infections per year go untreated because of the public health crisis in the Third World...and within Third World communities in the U.S.

*AIW* goes beyond a static view to analyze where there is dangerous vulnerability for the future spread of HIV. They ring a badly needed alarm about the densely populated countries of Southeast Asia where the incidence of AIDS is still low but where many factors point to a rapid burgeoning of the epidemic if concerted measures are not taken immediately.

This book is also clear, contrary to the prevailing cynicism, in arguing that prevention efforts, if done right, can work. Not only has safer sex education had the effect of dramatically reducing the rate of transmission in the gay communities of San Francisco and New York City, but also a number of needle exchange programs, reviewed in a useful essay by Don Des Jarlais and Patricia Case, have had significant success in reducing HIV transmissions among injection drug users. However, a deadly irony prevails in current prevention efforts. The method proven to be the most effective in raising consciousness and initiating behavior changes in the various communities—peer support—was the approach least used by the national AIDS programs that were surveyed.

Finally, to its credit, *AIW* makes at least a formal statement about the costs of bigotry: "...societal discrimination in all its forms creates increased vulnerability to HIV infection. Therefore, efforts to protect human rights and to promote human dignity are extremely important for protecting public health in the HIV/AIDS pandemic."

Despite its strengths, this tome has a number of problems, big and small. In covering such a broad area, there are bound to be gaps and inadequacies. For example, the serious problem of detecting TB infection in those with HIV is severely understated, and the effort to measure the important equity gap



between rich and poor nations is distorted by only looking at the use of the expensive and problematic drug AZT rather than focusing on the very effective preventative medications for PCP (pneumocystis carinii pneumonia) and treatments for opportunistic infections.

A broader weakness is that so much of the assessment is based on data provided by government surveys. Many of these statistics are worthless because statements about priorities and allocation of funds tell us next to nothing about what is actually getting done in the field. The assurance of prisons, for example, that "There has been real progress in bringing information on AIDS and risk behaviors to...prisoners" is rubbish because mainly what is measured is output of government literature—pamphlets that prisoners don't read, by officials they don't trust, in a language they don't understand, with no engagement of specific risk factors in prison.

*AIW*'s biggest problem is the social perspective of the editors and many of the authors. Despite the general statement against discrimination, the editors virtually ignore the forms of oppression that have acted as central causes of the pandemic—the disdain for gays, drug users, and Third World people that lurked behind the initial criminal negligence, which allowed the infection to mushroom; this disdain continues today in the lack of adequate focus and resources to stem the tide of this mass killer. The editors provide no critique or even analysis of homophobia in *AIW*; instead they make reference to the subjective state of the victims: "Some gay communities...feared stigmatization..." They make rhetorical references to the need for "peer" support and "empowerment" of those affected, but permit little air time for actual voices from the grassroots, concrete studies of peer projects, or developed examples of organizing in the affected communities. In short *AIW* misses just how much AIDS has been a social epidemic and can't be stemmed without conscious mobilization against the structures of oppression and neglect.

The clearest example is chapter six, which focuses on the cascading social and economic impact of this plague in Africa—a matter that should be at the heart of this book. This essay, written by two analysts with the World Bank, does list some of the effects of AIDS in Africa: loss of productive labor, decline of agriculture, strain on family structure, and overloading of an already stressed public health system. But this is a soulless exposition with little feeling for the harrowing human tragedy in progress. One must wonder what Africans will make of this dispassionate discussion of AIDS' effect on demographics given the World Bank's emphasis on limiting population growth there. Most fundamentally, this chapter says nothing about the reasons these countries are such economic basket cases in the first place—nothing about the incredible toll taken on Africa by the history of the Western-imposed slave trade, colonialism, and continued hemorrhaging under the auspices of the world market. Inexcusably, it says nothing about the "structural adjustment programs" (mentioned only once, in passing, in another section of the book) currently being imposed on these countries by the World Bank that have desiccated the public sector. To assess sub-Saharan African's ability to respond to the AIDS

Rural Uganda: A man dying from AIDS is attended by his wife who is also infected.



scourge, it's important to know, for example, that per capita food production there fell 9 percent over the course of the 1980s, and that average gross domestic production was declining by 2.9 percent a year.

This studied obliviousness to social reality also undermines *AIW*'s subsequent righteous appeal for a transfer of funds to the poorer nations. Without mention of the history and structures of exploitation, such a request sounds like a plea for charity, which will not receive much sympathy in these days of "tight budgets." In truth, a transfer of resources is a profound obligation as reparations to begin to meet human needs. Being honest about such institutions as the World Bank would also underscore why the best programs, the best use for resources, will be generated by the affected nations and communities themselves.

Despite the elitist perspective of much of the book, there are important exceptions such as an insert on the role of ACT-UP activism in speeding drug development, a strong essay by Elizabeth Reid on the impact of women's social status, and a useful survey by Jeff O'Malley on the cutting-edge role of non-governmental AIDS service organizations.

*AIW*, with its predominantly top-down perspective and excessive reliance on surveys of governmental programs, could be fairly characterized as "bureaucratic." But, to be fair, it is an unusually enlightened bureaucratic approach—not only because of the awareness of such concepts as anti-discrimination, peer support, and empowerment, but most particularly for its clarion call about the mounting conflagration in Africa and the ominous vulnerability in Southeast Asia. In this regard those of us who have been involved in AIDS and/or anti-racist activism have to be very self-critical that we haven't been screaming bloody murder about this unconscionable and preventable human tragedy. The urgent task remains to raise consciousness and fight for adequate resources and programs for the global AIDS pandemic.

The last chapter of *AIW* reminds us of how much we live in one world. Laurie Garrett argues that a future viral epidemic is almost inevitable, given present policies. Many viruses lie dormant and localized, especially in viral rich tropical areas. Terrible health conditions such as malnutrition and poor sanitation make those populations much more vulnerable to succumbing to disease. Impoverished public health surveillance systems mean that serious new pathogens may well not be detected until they become widespread; modern transportation and intercourse mean that such infections can rapidly spread to other parts of the world. "From a microbial point of view, the global village of the 1990s is minuscule. Never has it been so obvious that poor health care and disease surveillance in one corner of

the planet can imperil every person on earth, rich, as well as poor."

As with problems of the environment, AIDS shows us just how much the fate of all humankind is interlinked. It is not just right and more fully human to respond to the plight and struggles of the oppressed, but there is no way the destruction and misery won't redound on us to the point where it will eventually threaten the coherent functioning of society and any chance for a decent future for our children. Unfortunately, the social structures and psychology of privilege are so entrenched that those who are presently comfortable don't seem capable of deeply identifying with the oppressed. The outlook for a timely and adequate response to the crisis is not bright. □

*David Gilbert is a political prisoner, AIDS educator, and prisoner activist currently incarcerated in the Great Meadow Correctional Facility in Comstock, New York.*

"Spread facts, not fear! Help Crush AIDS!"  
Kenyan Red Cross leaflet in Swahili

**Eneza ukweli ..sio hofu!**

- UKIMWI ni ugonjwa mpya ambao unaenea ulimwenguni kote. Maeleu ya watu wanashikwa na ugonjwa huu kila siku.
- UKIMWI umefika Kenya pia.
- UKIMWI kwa kawaida hueneza katiika ngono.
- UKIMWI waweza kupishwa na mama mjamzito kwa mwanawe kabla ya kuzaliwa.
- UKIMWI waweza pia kueneza kwa sindano na bomba za sindano zilizo chafu.
- UKIMWI hauwezi kueneza kwa kugusana kama vile kusalmiana kwa mikono, kutumia vyoo pamoja au magari ya rila.
- UKIMWI hauwezi kueneza na wadudu kama mbu, au wanyama, kupitia chakula na maji.

**Help crush**

# WRITE THROUGH THE WALLS

*The U.S. government says there are no political prisoners or POWs in this country. Yet the partial list below shows this claim is a complete lie. We urge you to write them and to send literature. These women and men represent the best of the movement. Make their struggle yours. "The Real Dragon" sponsors a continuing book drive to political prisoners and POWs. For more information or to send contributions write: POB 3294, Berkeley, CA 94703-9901.*

## **Puerto Rican Prisoners of War**

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Mohaman Koti #80-A-808  
Jalil A. Muntaqin #77-A-4283  
s/n Anthony Bottom  
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